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ABSTRACT

The Families Matter series of papers from the Harvard Family Research Project advances the concept of family-centered child care, advocating an approach to early childhood education that addresses the development of the child and family together. Grounded in family support principles, which build on family strengths and work from a community's culture and resources, family-centered child care incorporates positive attitudes about working with parents and practical activities to serve the family. Asserting that a key place to promote widespread use of family support principles and practices is through the child care training system, the papers that make up the series focus on how the child care field trains providers to include family support. This volume in the series describes the range of family support principles and practices of 11 child care programs. The programs, chosen through a nomination process, reflect the diversity of child care arrangements, including home-based services, center-based programs, and comprehensive early childhood programs. The report also examines the challenges in building positive relationships with families and the opportunities to improve program-family relationships through training and professional development. Based on the experiences of the programs, a training framework is proposed. The report concludes with recommendations for increased training in implementing family-centered approaches through expanded content and better integration with existing training institutions. Appendices present the data collection and analysis process of program profiles. Contains 64 references. (EV)

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Family-Centered Child Care

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HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT
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Harvard Family Research Project

Founded in 1983 by Dr. Heather Weiss, the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) is today at the center of a national movement to strengthen and support American families. HFRP's pathbreaking research provides practitioners, researchers, and policymakers with timely, insightful information about effective family support initiatives.

Disseminating its research widely, HFRP links people, programs, ideas, and resources together to create innovative family support programs and services and family-sustaining policies. HFRP's research helps states create systems to monitor and assess programs and services, and helps communities better integrate family support services in neighborhood programs. Using HFRP data, schools are learning more about the specific benefits of parent involvement and the best strategies for successfully engaging the entire family. HFRP's research findings are enabling practitioners to design culturally appropriate programs, and helping training and education programs effectively prepare teachers to work with families.

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THE *FAMILIES MATTER* SERIES

Heather Weiss

The idea of family-centered child care, which combines the care of children with support for the family, has gained prominence in recent years (Anderson, 1996; Galinsky & Weissbourd, 1992; Poersch & Blank, 1996; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1997). The appeal of family-centered child care lies in the potential to meet several goals to improve the quality of life for families: the fostering of continuity between home and program, improved parenting knowledge and skills for parents and caregivers alike, and the ability to minimize family stress through the provision of direct or referred services. Family-centered child care also seeks to reinforce consumer participation and to validate parents'[1] rights to influence the programs in which their children are enrolled. In the absence of national child care standards, and given the various types of caregiving arrangements available, parents need to monitor programs for compatibility with their own expectations (Cochran, 1993). Family-centered child care is equally valuable for the type of relationship it develops with families, by adopting principles of mutual respect, awareness of family strengths, and the primacy of the family in child development.

This focus on the family broadens the roles of child care providers: They are expected not only to care for children but also to serve families. Most providers, however, enter the profession because they enjoy being with children. They do not necessarily have an interest in children's families, nor are they necessarily prepared to work with them. How providers can be trained for family-centered child care and what knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to develop are the subject of the *Families Matter* series.

The *Families Matter* series examines the ways in which both children and families are supported by family-centered child care programs, and the training that is being offered to providers so that they can work competently with families. The reports in the series consist of 1) a study of the principles and practices of family-centered child care programs and their implications for training, 2) a study of the roles of child care resource and referral agencies in family support services and training, and 3) a study of the training offered by two-year colleges to prepare early childhood providers to work with families.

Challenges of Family-Centered Child Care

An estimated 13 million children are in child care and other early childhood programs each day (Adams & Poersch, 1996), underscoring the childrearing responsibilities shared by families and child care providers. The regular contact between families and child care programs suggests that child care is an ideal arena for extending support to families. However, both professional and interpersonal factors make it difficult to realize this potential. The culture of the profession — consisting of beliefs, norms, and attitudes — has emphasized an elaboration of child development principles and standards of practice; less attention has been paid to the important roles of families and communities in child development. Without an emphasis on building relationships with families, dominant professional perspectives can overlook the knowledge and competencies of parents in childrearing.

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[1] The term *parent* extends to all adult kin caregivers who actively participate in a child's upbringing.

Perceptions of early childhood professionals and those of parents regarding the quality and content of care are often quite different. Child care professionals define quality in terms of structural attributes such as staff-to-child ratios, licensing, and training — factors of little importance to many parents (Clarke-Stewart, Gruber & Fitzgerald, 1994; Larner, 1996). While the early childhood field has endorsed "developmentally appropriate practice," low-income and less educated parents tend to expect more structured and didactic approaches (Stipek, Milburn, Clements & Daniels, 1992). Moreover, views about ways to nurture, discipline, and socialize a child diverge when families and providers come from different cultural backgrounds (Chang, Muckelroy & Pulido-Tobiassen, 1996). Because one of the goals of family-centered child care is to involve families in influencing program directions, the dissimilarity between professional and parent viewpoints stands out as an issue that must be addressed at the levels of policy, professional development, and service delivery.

The relationship between parents and providers, too, has often been less than ideal. Feelings of ambivalence — on the part of both the providers and parents — about work and family life often spill over to caregiving relationships. Providers who believe that mothers should care for their infants and toddlers are more judgmental about them (Galinsky & Weissbourd, 1992; Modigliani, 1996). Working parents, on the other hand, often experience guilt and a sense of loss of control over childrearing. Additionally, young, poor, single, and minority parents are the least likely to be viewed positively by and receive support from their children's caregivers (Galinsky & Weissbourd, 1992; Kontos & Wells, 1986).

There is also some evidence that parents may seek less rather than more involvement. Providers are likely to regard home-program communication as more important than parents do (Ghazoini & Readdich, 1994). Many parents do not have the time for conversations beyond the very brief drop-off and pick-up times (Endsley & Minnish, 1991; Powell, 1980). Even though some programs seek to provide expanded support, parents are less likely to consider it important. They may look for social support in other settings and prefer to keep family situations a private matter (Ghazoini & Readdich, 1994). Where family involvement is mandated in subsidized programs, some parents experience increased stress, which may suggest difficulties in managing both employment and involvement (Parker, Piotrkowski, Kessler-Sklar, Baker, Peay & Clark, 1997).

These differences are complex in nature and require skilled communication and negotiation skills. Unfortunately, most providers have relatively little training and supervision in supporting parents (Powell, 1991). As long as training remains child-focused, the providers who work with families cannot be expected to demonstrate family support principles in practice nor to be effective brokers of consumer education (Larner, 1995). Furthermore, the training of child care providers is a patchwork of different sources, posing a challenge to coordination and accreditation (Morgan, 1998).

Opportunities for Advancing Family-Centered Child Care

Family-centered child care requires an integrated policy approach, in which improved training and professional development play a key role. Preservice and inservice training programs that are comprehensive and continuous have the capacity to influence providers so that they are better prepared to support families (Dunst, 1994). Several family support programs have developed training models that impart knowledge about family functioning, human development, and group process, as well as skills related to communication and relationship building (Porter & Rice, 1995). These and other resources can be drawn upon to meet the specific needs and interests of providers.

Parent perspectives on child care also provide an opportunity to shape training in ways that foster the development of meaningful relationships and appropriate supports. Parents seek quality caregiving and usually place a high value on features that are characteristic of a family-support model. Parents look for trusting and loving caregivers, opportunities for healthy child socialization and learning, compatibility with the provider's childrearing philosophy, and ongoing coordination between home and provider (Clarke-Stewart, Gruber & Fitzgerald, 1994; Hofferth, Brayfield, Deich & Holcomb, 1991; Mitchell, Cooperstein & Larner, 1992; Modigliani, 1996). They prefer child care that reflects their values and views on childrearing, making for greater continuity in home and program environments (Clarke-Stewart, Gruber & Fitzgerald, 1994). When parents use early childhood programs as a resource, they tend to value the work of providers more and develop more constructive relationships with them (Galinsky & Weissbourd, 1992; Schultz, Lopez, & Hochberg, 1996). Frequent communication between providers and parents broadens the content of information exchanges to family-related and not just child-related topics (Powell, 1980), suggesting that child care can be a part of a network of informal support for parents.

Conditions today favor incorporating family support into the training of child care providers. Well-publicized research on brain development in infants revealing the importance of providing stimulating environments for children at the earliest ages has brought national attention to the care of young children. Policymakers are allocating more resources for quality improvement in child care. States are already allocating some of their existing child care quality improvement grants to expand training for providers and to develop collaborative relationships among local agencies in developing training systems. The top priority for training paves the way for including family support training.

Additionally, several new programs for young children require a family support component. These programs include state-funded early education, Head Start and child care collaboration, and community-based family resource centers. Their growth is likely to increase the need for providers trained to work with both children and families.

Documenting the Challenges and Opportunities

The series seeks to facilitate learning among those responsible for the training of the early childhood workforce. This group of practitioners consists mainly of program administrators, trainers, and educators. Our work differs from studies of family support curricula (Porter & Rice, 1995) in that we set out to examine the status of teaching and service delivery practices as they exist in a variety of child care programs and training institutions. By documenting the family support components in different types of child care settings, we derived a comprehensive training framework. We then used this framework to understand the status of family-centered training in resource and referral agencies and two-year colleges. Throughout the series, we identify issues and promising practices, and we offer guidelines for advancing a family-centered approach to both training and practice.

The method of researching and writing these reports has been practitioner-based and practitioner-oriented. Our experience has shown that many of the program administrators and educators in the early childhood field desire information about what their peers are doing and how they are doing it, and find it useful to learn how their peers have arrived at creative solutions to recurring problems. They are also interested in addressing common practice dilemmas and in understanding how new ways of doing business becomes routine practice. By documenting the ways in which practitioners have developed family-centered service and training programs and have addressed implementation issues creatively and comprehensively, we believe that practitioners can learn from one another and find better ways to integrate family support in their work.

The research for the series examined the ways in which programs, resource and referral agencies, and two-year colleges focus on developing family-centered child care through training or service delivery. Although we did not interview parents, a number of studies on parent perspectives on early care and education guided our work. The mixed assessments described earlier — both the discrepancies in parent and provider attitudes and the promise of supportive relationships — point to the importance of relationship building, flexibility, mutual respect, and shared learning, which also form the basis of a family-centered approach.

Family-Centered Child Care is a volume in the *Families Matter* series that describes the range of family support principles and practices of eleven child care programs. The programs, chosen through a nomination process, reflect the diversity of child care arrangements, including home-based services, center-based programs, and comprehensive early childhood programs. This report also examines the challenges in building positive relationships with families and the opportunities to improve program-family relationships through training and professional development. Based on the experiences of the programs, a training framework is proposed. The report concludes with recommendations for increased training in family-centered approaches through expanded content and better integration with existing training institutions.

FAMILY-CENTERED CHILD CARE

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAMS

Child care programs play a critical role in the lives of families today. While the care and education of children are primary, there is a growing policy and professional interest to support families as well. For this to be practiced effectively requires a workforce that is trained to work with parents. The need to prepare providers for this task, however, has been neglected in research and policy development. To address this gap, this report provides information to child care practitioners about the ways in which family-centered approaches are being designed in center and home-based settings. It also offers educators and trainers in early childhood education a training framework based on provider practices.

The questions that guided the preparation of this report were:

- How are child care programs supporting families?
- What are the challenges to integrating family support and child care?
- How are providers trained to develop better relationships with parents?

Program Selection and Characteristics

To understand the patterns of family-centered principles and activities the research for this report examined eleven child care programs. These programs included child care centers, family child care homes that were part of provider networks, and centers that represented partnerships with Head Start or a school district. (See Appendix A for research methods.) The programs were chosen through a nomination process in which several informants from national child care organizations were contacted and asked to provide the names of child care programs with a family focus. Nomination letters were also sent out to all members of the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. From the pool of sixty programs that were nominated, the research team selected eleven programs that offered a breadth, depth, or innovation of services to families (a wide range of services, intensive services in one area, or a unique approach to serving families). (See Table 1.) Programs were also selected to reflect services to a range of families according to income and cultural background.

The study was conducted through extensive telephone interviews with program directors, coordinators of training and family services, and providers. The research team also reviewed documents provided by the programs. From these sources of information, the team prepared profiles of each program, which were sent back to directors for verification. Information from the interviews and documents was analyzed for cross-program themes.

The programs are described briefly below and more extensively in Appendix B.

Associated Family Child Care Services — Chelsea, in Chelsea, Massachusetts, is part of a network of child care provider agencies serving the Boston area. Associated offers comprehensive support for home-based caregivers, helping them provide enriched services to families such as parent lending libraries, parent social gatherings, and professional counseling.

Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Center, in Washington D.C., is rooted in the community it serves. It hires women from the community to staff its early childhood program and trains them extensively. It has developed a youth leadership program where youth ages 16 to 19 are hired to assist the staff.

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care, in Somerville, Massachusetts, is a child care network under the auspices of Catholic Charities. It serves 54 family child care homes with multiple services, including comprehensive support for families where there is documented abuse or neglect in the home.

Community Family Development, Inc., in Poughkeepsie, New York, has developed a collaborative program with its school district to enrich preschool education and offer parent education and support groups for high school teen parents.

Community Lab School for Family-Centered Child Car, in Fort Worth, Texas, has developed an extensive menu of services to minimize the stress of balancing work and family life and to facilitate parents' spending more time with children. On-site services include take-home meals, dry cleaning, mail drop box, and exercise classes for parents and children.

Gardner Children's Center, in San Jose, California, provides subsidized child care and developmental services to low-income children. It utilizes the Parent Services Project approach to support parents in organizing educational and social activities and offers an extensive professional development program for its staff.

KCMC Child Development Corporation, in Kansas City, Missouri, has launched, with creative financing arrangements, Full Start centers which incorporates Head Start's comprehensive child and family services into existing child care centers. The services are provided to all enrolled children regardless of whether their families meet Head Start eligibility requirements.

Los Niños Child Development and Family Program, in Napa, California, uses the Parent Services Project approach in organizing family activities. Parents assume responsibility for designing and implementing these activities.

Pacific Oaks Children's School, in Pasadena, California, has institutionalized mechanisms to build parent-program relations, such as yearly home visits, parent conferences twice a year, weekly group meetings between providers and parents of infants and toddlers, and daily informal coffee chats during drop-off and pick-up times.

Sheltering Arms Child Development and Family Support, in Atlanta, Georgia, has developed a training program for its staff and others in the community that includes a strong family support component. It offers parents a wide range of support and services, including home visits and parenting sessions through a Parents as Teachers (Missouri-based) program.

Webster Child Care Center, in Webster Groves, Missouri, has collaborated with its school district to offer a Parents as Teachers program that focuses on nurturing child development through enhanced parenting. It also has developed an intergenerational program with senior citizens volunteering in classrooms.

Table 1:
Summary of Child Care Programs

Program Name	Program Director	Type of Setting	Number Served	Population Served
Associated Child Care Services — Chelsea Chelsea, MA	Tracy Lang, Program Director	Family Child Care Network	100 children, ages two months to six years	Ethnically diverse; low-income families; mostly single parents
Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Learning Center Washington, D.C.	Beatriz Otero, Director	Child Care Center	235 children, birth to age fourteen years	Ethnically diverse; low- and moderate-income families
Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care Somerville, MA	Pat Cronin, Program Manager	Family Child Care Network	230 children, ages eight weeks to five years	50% ethnic minority; low-income and at-risk families
Community Family Development, Inc. Poughkeepsie, NY	Linda Sella, Program Director	Two Comprehensive Family Centers	65 children, ages six weeks to twelve years	Ethnically diverse; low- to middle-income families; mostly single parents
Community Lab School for Family-Centered Child Care Forth Worth, TX	Cathy McFerrin, Program Director	Child Care Center	120 children, ages six weeks to kindergarten age	Mostly Caucasian; dual-income, middle-income families
KCMC Child Development Corporation Kansas City, MO	Dwayne Crompton, Executive Director	Fourteen Comprehensive Centers	2,000 children, ages two to eight years	Ethnically diverse; low- to moderate-income families
Gardner Children's Center San Jose, CA	Frederick J. Ferrer, Executive Director	Multi-service Child Care Center	200 children, ages two years, nine months to twelve years	Predominantly Latino and low-income; priority given to children under Protective Services
Los Niños Child Development and Family Program Napa, CA	Betty Koufos, Program Director	Two Centers — one Child Care and one Infant Center	12 infants, ages birth to two years; and 60 children ages two to five years	Mostly Latino; low- to middle-income families; also teen parents

Pacific Oaks Children's School Pasadena, CA	Yolanda Torres, Director	Child Care Center	200 children, ages three months to nine years	37% ethnic minority; upper-middle- and middle-income families
Sheltering Arms Child Development and Family Support Atlanta, GA	Elaine Draeger, Executive Director	Twelve Multi-service Child Care Centers	1,600 children served, ages six weeks to five years	Primarily young African- American single-parent, low-income families; middle class families in some centers
Webster Child Care Center Webster Groves, MO	Sonia Hartman, Executive Director	Child Care Center	165 children, ages 6 weeks through six years	Primarily Caucasian; middle-class families

FAMILY-CENTERED CHILD CARE

Both the home and child care program exert important influences on children's learning and development; equally important, however, is the reciprocal relationship between the home and program (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Children's development is enhanced by the mutual support that exists among adults who share in their care and education. James Coleman (1991) called such a relationship "social capital," and described it as the "strength of social relationships that make available to a person the resources of others." A parent can utilize the relationship with a child care teacher to share information and identify childrearing practices that further a child's development. In the same manner, a teacher can rely on parents to reinforce a child's progress. It is this "closure" in the relationship among adults that reinforces consistent and appropriate nurturing. Where the child care setting connects parents to each other, it builds another network of resources that families can draw upon for information, guidance, and help.

This section of the report describes how child care programs are seeking to create this closure in the relationship between providers and families, the challenges to that relationship, and the ways in which providers are supported in their work through training and organizational structures. Four findings are reported:

- Child care programs design a range of supports and services to families.

- Child care directors and staff recognize the difficulties of implementing family-centered child care. In this study, informants identified four typical sources of difficulties between providers and parents: 1) lack of time and family involvement in child care programs; 2) lack of clarity of roles for parents and providers; 3) differing views of childrearing practices; and 4) concerns of families under stress.

- Child care providers' training in working with families is both limited and highly variable.

- Organizational policies and structures support the implementation of family-centered principles and practices.

FINDING ONE: CHILD CARE PROGRAMS DESIGN A RANGE OF SUPPORTS AND SERVICES TO FAMILIES.

Each of the programs in the study seeks to support families in ways that go beyond child care. Based on the principles, approach, and activities of these programs, Table 2 illustrates a framework of family-centered child care. It consists of a philosophical orientation that recognizes family and community influences on child development; thus, program design pays attention to the cultural and socioeconomic contexts of families. It focuses on relationships between parents and child care providers which are based on mutual learning rather than on an expert to parent basis. It offers services to families, and parents have the opportunity to make decisions through various mechanisms, including governance roles.

Table 2:
Child-Centered and Family-Centered Child Care

Program Characteristics	Child-Centered Care	Family-Centered Care
Philosophical orientation	Development of the whole child	Development of the whole child in the context of family and community
Role of providers	Providers impart knowledge	Providers respect families' knowledge; engage in mutual learning
Role of families	Involvement in parenting education and other activities	Involvement in co-designing parenting education and other activities
Services	Focus on child	Focus on family (child and adult)

Philosophical Orientation

Programs adopt a family support philosophy

The programs in the study share a strong commitment to family support principles. Each program's brochures and manuals for providers and families clearly define the program's policy of respecting families and encouraging their participation. This statement also sends a message to staff about the important role of families, and to parents about their value as partners in caregiving.

According to informants, family support means that the bond between parent and child is strengthened. In stressing the primacy of the family in child development, they realize that child care is a temporary arrangement. Eventually parent and child will leave a program; what is important is laying the foundation for a continuing strong parent-child relationship.

A family-centered approach recognizes that family strengths are promoted or minimized by the community (Galinsky and Weissbourd, 1994). In this study, programs tend to develop activities that build on family strengths in the context of community factors such as culture, social class and family structure. Programs serving low-income families stress support and assistance for children and families so that they can achieve their goals in life. One program designed its center to accommodate the needs of parents making the transition from welfare to work; there are spaces for parents to use for different functions, such as to plan their career development, learn about community resources, and relax and network with other parents. The programs serving middle-class families view their services as positive experiences to enrich the family or as places that welcome parents and offer relief from daily stress. Still others have developed special activities for fathers and grandparents who are primary caregivers.

Family-centered programs support adult development. Sheltering Arms (Atlanta, GA) believes that the “changing needs” of families encompass a “person’s individual journey of becoming and learning.” This process of growth pertains not only to parenthood but also to other adult roles. For example, parents who have not completed high school are encouraged to finish school and to think about career development. A director shares the following vignette on how child care programs can support parents:

> *One of our parents dropped out of school. She said she just couldn't make it, but we kept on encouraging her, and finally she did enroll (for a GED). She discovered she could learn and she went on to enter a technical school and pursue a career. That's the kind of thing we are able to do a lot, helping parents see the long term.*

Some directors observe that providers can serve as role models for parents who aspire to self-development and self-sufficiency. By showing other parents how they are able to balance the demands of work and family life and continue to work on professional self-improvement, they send a message that multiple goals can be attained.

Roles and Relationships

Programs work to strengthen parenting knowledge and skills

Reaching common agreement about childrearing is highly valued by program directors. To this end programs offer multiple opportunities for informal exchanges and formal sessions on child development and parenting. Providers and other child care staff reach parents through different media and in the home language of families. The information is made available through newsletters, workshops, and courses as well as through informal conversations. Many programs have lending libraries containing materials on parenting. At least one child care service places lending libraries in family child care homes to accommodate parents who do not have time to go to public libraries.

Programs create opportunities for parents to provide input into parenting topics. They design parenting sessions to be interactive so that mutual learning can occur among parents and between parents and providers. In order to be responsive to the interests of families, programs regularly seek the opinions and suggestions of parents and other family members. At the Gardner Children's Center (San Jose, CA), staff members organize an annual Parent Wish Night. Parents generate a "menu of services" on parenting that is facilitated by staff throughout the year.

Equally important to what is communicated is how parenting information is conveyed. Rather than being judgmental, some program directors learn to make parents comfortable and to engage in honest conversations. One informant relates the following episode:

> *A lot of families didn't show up in our parent meetings because they were afraid to talk about what going on in their homes. They felt that I might be judging them or trying to change what they were doing with their children. They feared I would turn them in (to social services) if they told me they spanked their children. So I had to sit with them and talk about their concerns. I brought in a teacher from a community college who is a single parent and I found that our families can relate to her because many of them are single parents. I also invite facilitators who can conduct the sessions in Spanish. We talk about what we can do to help a child be a little more cooperative without using bribes or resorting to screaming and nagging. We take real situations that families go through and discuss ways of bringing some peace into our homes. (We have) created a much more relaxed environment... and now we get pretty good participation.*

Additionally, providers share child development information informally with parents. They offer advice on many aspects of child development and often become role models for teenage parents or first-time parents. They use these conversations to learn about parent perspectives and to understand a child's behavior that arises from a particular home situation.

Programs foster parent-to-parent relationships

Connections among parents are important. Parents serve as information resources for one another on a number of matters, from effective childrearing techniques to community activities for the entire family; they also share their experiences as parents and individuals, and provide mutual support. For example, Community Family Development (Poughkeepsie, NY) fosters relationships among single parents through its parent support groups. By matching parents with similar interests or concerns in groups, the program facilitates the development of peer support systems.

Some program directors, feeling that parents are often isolated and lack opportunities to form social relationships, promote parent activities such as shared meals to encourage them to get to know each other and establish relationships. They organize or encourage parents to organize social events for parents only, giving them time for respite. In these instances, in order to encourage attendance, programs provide child care.

Programs seek to build positive parent-program relationships

What makes for a healthy relationship between parents and providers? The informants from the programs in the study identified the following elements: shared values, mutual respect and trust, and effective communication. By focusing on these areas as goals for practice, programs are able to address some of the challenges related to the different childrearing beliefs and practices of parents and providers.

Shared values

A good relationship exists when parent and teacher affirm the shared nature of caregiving and the importance of mutual support. They seek common ground in doing what is best for the child's safety and well-being, and his or her positive development. To achieve this goal involves a mutual learning process in which communication plays a vital role.

Matching families and their child care arrangements is critical to establish and maintain supportive relationships. Directors and providers offer parents clear information about their philosophy and the ways in which it is reflected in policies regarding family visits, arrival and departure, communication, curriculum, children's illness, and other aspects of daily caregiving. Programs in the study also try to bring some aspects of the home culture into the child care setting. While most rely on trying to establish regular communication with families, a few programs encourage visits to the neighborhood and homes of families. The latter are especially useful when providers and families come from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

Mutual respect and trust

Mutual respect requires a commitment from both parents and providers to learn as much as possible about each other's ideas and attitudes regarding childrearing in its familial and cultural contexts. Some informants believe that trust grows out of the knowledge of childrearing practices: Parents have to know why providers do certain things, and providers have to know why parents do what they do. This knowledge prepares both to develop confidence in each other's competence. Providers must also be open to learning from families and understand that parents, especially those who are poor and stressed, try to do their best for their children.

Relationships of trust do not happen automatically. Each party must earn the credibility and trust of the other. The coordinator of one program, for example, in trying to be sensitive to parents' feelings and needs, lets parents know that she will listen to their concerns and suggestions. Furthermore, part of its training program includes handling sensitive communication. Trainees reflect upon and clarify their own position on issues such as death, religion, and sexuality and learn to discuss these with families so as to avoid misunderstandings. The goal is to make parents feel comfortable with their child care arrangements (Hearth Family and Community Resource Center, 1995).

Maintaining trust means recognizing that mistakes should not deter long-term relationships. One director comments, "We get frustrated by some of the choices that families make in their lives because they're not always healthy choices. It's frustrating, but we have to remind ourselves that we make mistakes just like the families in our program do. We have to be here to support each other and try to understand each other and keep the trust."

Effective communication

Consistent and frequent communication between parent and teacher builds secure relationships between them. For many providers the best way to support parents is by listening and asking questions that clarify parents' attitudes and feelings. Good communication is essential when imparting child development information, especially to young or inexperienced mothers. One director notes that family child care providers in her network "give untold reams of advice to parents from teething to sleeping habits." She observes that parents may often feel more comfortable talking to providers than to a pediatrician or members of their own families. In these interactions, it is necessary to know how to give constructive criticism as well as positive reinforcement. Additionally, developing good communication skills is critical to handling sensitive and difficult communication such as the differences in child rearing practices. The challenge for providers is to present clear explanations and show respect.

When programs serve groups from different cultural backgrounds, communication can be especially difficult. Misunderstandings between parents and providers often result from language barriers. Most of the programs in this study offer training on cross-cultural communication and hire bilingual staff or people from the community who share the same backgrounds as the families served.

At the Los Niños Child Development and Family Program in Napa, CA, parents and providers work together to develop a program that respects the diversity of the community. Staff members are not familiar with all of the cultures represented in the program. Workshops on multiculturalism address the differences and fears that make relationships uncomfortable. These training sessions are open to both parents and staff members to work through issues together. One staff member has said, "What's exciting is the presence of parents. Cultural differences are issues all of us have to deal with. It's not like the directors and coordinators have the answers to share with parents. We have to let go of the notion that we're the experts. We have to work (with parents) to make the program a place that everybody feels good about."

Sensitive communication is also necessary when staff have to inform parents about developmental problems with their children. Providers have experienced situations in which parents become upset, resist staff interpretations, or feel guilty about their childrearing practices. Community Family Development in Poughkeepsie, NY, seeks to reassure parents by asking them to bring friends or close relatives to discuss a child's development with the center's teachers and specialists. The parent-team conference is structured to put parents at ease as much as possible and to offer recommendations. Some programs provide on-site speech and physical therapy and relieve parents of the need to leave work and schedule appointments for their children.

Programs mobilize family involvement

Recognizing the primacy of parents in their child's development, the programs in the study make numerous efforts to engage parents in stimulating interactions with their child. They work with parents to discover a level of participation that works best for them — one that balances their desire to be involved with their child's care with other demands on their time. Family participation takes many forms: preparing breakfast for children at the child care program, taking part in classroom and family activities, promoting reading, working with providers to design curricula, creating learning projects for home use, and developing an individual learning plan for a child with special needs.

Rather than assume the role of experts, providers involve parents in making choices with regard to their child's development and matters related to the child care program and its activities for both children and families. For some programs in this study, developing a family-centered program has meant a shift from doing things for parents to doing things with them.

For example, Associated Day Care Services' (Chelsea, MA) family child care services have evolved to help parents understand that they have rights and choices. Parents who come seeking child care are given the names of four or five providers whom they can visit. A staff member also offers consumer information and guidance. The entire selection process seeks to ensure that parents are satisfied with their child care choices.

Family involvement also means parents' being able to shape policies and programs. All the center-based programs encourage parents to join advisory committees or boards. At Community Family Development, parents elect the 22-member Board of Directors, which includes four of their peers. The Community Lab School (Fort Worth, TX) has two decision-making committees: family services and fundraising. Ten to twelve parents serve as representatives of their children's age group on these committees.

Having parents take a proactive role in a program may require leadership training skills. At the Gardner Children's Center (San Jose, CA) providers undergo training to instill parent leadership through parent meetings. The goal is to have parents assume decision-making responsibilities for the parent component of the program.

A Continuum of Services

Programs meet family needs

Programs listen to the concerns of parents and engage in problem-solving. They design services to meet the interests and needs of the families that they serve. For example, to help low-income working families struggling to pay for child care, Community Family Development (Poughkeepsie, NY) has developed a scholarship fund using money from private and public sources to pay for child care. In addition, the program simplifies the lives of working parents by providing transportation to and from the public schools for its before- and after-school care for school-aged children. At Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care (MA), a local service organization that works with a network of family child care homes, the providers work closely with social workers to offer consistent support to a large number of families with children under protective services.

In their efforts to help parents schedule time with their children in an unhurried and relaxed environment, the Community Lab School (Fort Worth, TX) offers "stress-reduction services." In response to a parent survey, the school, which primarily serves middle-class families, provides services that include prepared take-out dinners; one-day dry cleaning; stamps for purchase and mail drop; shoe repair; sale of snacks for children for the drive home; and aerobics classes for parents and joint parent and children exercise classes. The center has a parent lounge where parents can view educational videos and relax for a few minutes with their children before heading back to the rush hour commute. There is also a designated room for mothers to breast feed their infants.

Many of the programs offer developmental services for children. These include on-site screening, counseling, and referrals to specialists when needed. A number of programs also provide services for children with special needs, a group that often has difficulty finding child care. For example, KCMC Child Development Corporation (Kansas City, MO) has developed a comprehensive program staffed by a disabilities specialist, mental health specialist, and family involvement coordinator. The program offers assessments, screenings, and referrals. The child care center is physically designed and equipped to attend to children's special needs.

Programs collaborate with community agencies

Collaboration with other agencies is an important strategy to provide families with a continuum of services. Family child care providers are part of networks or link with child care resource and referral agencies that give them access to additional resources, such as family literacy programs, parent groups, health information and referrals, and social workers. Center-based programs form partnerships with schools, retired communities, health centers, and child care resource and referral agencies for comprehensive programming. Additionally, collaboration for training on family support is working to make the concept and practice more widespread.

Agency partnerships enable programs to provide specific services that lie outside their expertise. Rather than develop the capacity to deliver these services, programs often save money by contracting out the service or negotiating for on-site publicly available services. For example, the Pacific Oaks Children's School in Pasadena, CA, contracts with a private agency to handle services for children with special needs and their families. The agency also helps the school and parents find appropriate placements for children when they transition out of Pacific Oaks. The Gardner Children's Center in San Jose, CA, is part of a county consortium of child care agencies that contracts with a counseling agency for mental health services. The agency supervises a doctoral intern who consults with staff and provides direct services to families.

Collaboration paves the way for instituting family support models in child care centers. For example, the Webster Child Care Center in Webster Groves, MO, has developed its staff capacity to offer parenting services through the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program. This is made possible through an agreement with the local school district to recruit families for PAT. The child care providers enroll in a five-day training course which leads to certification as a parent educator. Over two-thirds of the center's providers have been trained as parent educators. The PAT training equips the providers to communicate child development information to parents and to discuss a child's daily activities and development with them.

FINDING TWO: CHILD CARE DIRECTORS AND STAFF RECOGNIZE THE DIFFICULTIES OF IMPLEMENTING FAMILY-CENTERED CHILD CARE. In this study, informants identified four typical sources of difficulties between providers and parents: 1) lack of time and family involvement in child care programs; 2) lack of clarity of roles for parents and providers; 3) differing views of childrearing practices; and 4) concerns of families under stress.

Family-centered child care is both a model and a process. It is a model of the attitudes and practices that support child development and promote healthy interactions with families. It is also a process of developing these attitudes and practices, which often entails overcoming a mindset that focuses on the shortcomings of families and the shortage of resources, including time, to engage families in meaningful ways.

Program directors show concern over the lack of time and family involvement in the program

More than half of mothers in the work force have children under six years of age (United States Department of Commerce, 1995), and they are increasingly having their children cared for by non-relatives (Hofferth, Brayfield, Dietch, and Holcomb, 1991). All of the informants in the study confirmed that the parents of the children in their programs were either working or undergoing training in order to work. Given their busy lives, the parents did not have the time to get involved with the programs in ways that providers had hoped for.

Busy parents often do not have time to communicate with providers. One informant lamented the fact that many working parents may not even know the name of their child's teacher. Although programs often have regularly scheduled meetings between providers and parents, much of their contact occurs only during the limited — and often frazzled — time while parents are either dropping off or picking up their children. One study estimated that the typical center-based child care worker sees a parent for approximately 13.7 minutes of each week (Hughes, 1985). It is not surprising that this leads to frustration on the part of the provider:

> *Sometimes staff are frustrated because parents are on the run when they drop off and pick up their children. Staff find it difficult to articulate quickly and well when parents have a question and there is not enough time for a deep discussion.*

The stress created by this lack of time is reflected in reactions of the providers in such statements as, "I wasn't as friendly as I should have been," and "I didn't follow-up with the parent as quickly as I could have." Demanding schedules of parents and providers often create communication problems between them. Time constraints hinder the opportunity for providers to gain training in effective methods of communicating families. If a provider takes time off to get training, release time personnel must be found, and this is not always easy to do.

Programs have tried to increase family involvement in creative ways. Some programs offer coffee and snacks at drop-off and pick-up times to encourage parents to stay around and chat with providers and other parents. Others seek parent input on the kinds of parenting sessions or activities they are interested in attending. According to one staff person, "Flexibility is the key to any successful family-centered child care program. We try to have ongoing activities so that parents can plug into them whenever they can."

Program directors recognize the lack of clarity of roles for parents and providers

One potential source of tension in the parent-provider relationship is that the providers may come to view themselves as surrogate parents. Because children may spend many hours with their providers, the providers may try to assume too much responsibility in the lives of the children. While programs espouse the primacy of the parent, they also stress mutuality: Parents need to understand that the child is spending a significant part of the day with another adult, and thus, the role of that adult in the child's life is significant. This tension is reflected in the observations of informants:

> *Sometimes they (providers) resent the parent and feel that they are doing a much better job of raising the child. They have to learn to work with the parent for the sake of the child. Providers need to reflect about laying their own philosophy of childrearing and wanting the child to be raised the way they were."*
>
> *Most of our parents, even though they are wonderful people, have a hard time accepting their child's caregiver. It hurts them that we get to spend time with their child while they have to work.*

Providers' multiple roles — caregivers of children, partners with parents, self-employed workers or employees — can create ambiguity; as such, these roles are constantly redefined and adapted to deal with contextual issues. While providers are expected to be friendly and supportive toward families, they often question the boundaries of their roles, especially when parents make "extra requests" about feeding or clothing their child on a regular basis.

Providers may find it difficult to negotiate compromises or solutions to recurring problems. A common issue is that of the parent who is chronically late in picking up a child. While parents may have legitimate reasons for their behavior, some providers take it to mean a lack of respect, especially after they have tried to work with the parent to develop a solution. They feel that late pick-ups may be detrimental to a child because the child might feel abandoned.

Developing friendships with families extends the networks of support of families, but it can interfere with some of the professional concerns that might arise between programs and families. For family child care providers, balancing the caregiving and business aspects of their jobs can be difficult. They must deal directly with parents about sensitive issues such as making payments on time or making payments even when a child is absent.

Program directors cite differing views of childrearing practices as a barrier to family-centered child care

Child care programs often try to recruit staff from their own communities and sometimes even from among the parents whose children are enrolled in their programs in order to ensure that the providers reflect the values and characteristics of the families served. This practice also tends to motivate parents to get more involved in the program. Despite these attempts to bridge the gap between providers and parents, several informants in this study spoke of the difficulties involved in trying to manage differing views of childrearing practices and ways in which these affect their relationships with family members.

Providers and parents sometimes hold different views regarding the ways in which children learn. Providers are concerned that some parents dismiss the value of play as a way of learning. This suggests that providers have to be proactive in sharing the how and why of their practices with parents and also be open to incorporate the learning goals of parents for their children. To avoid dissatisfied parents, some directors emphasize the importance of informing parents about a program's educational philosophy prior to a child's enrollment.

Concerns regarding discipline arise because ways of disciplining a child vary widely from culture to culture. Views toward corporal punishment, in particular, differ considerably. Some parents ask providers to use it, even when doing so goes against the values of the providers and the policy of a center. Some providers may agree with the views of parents but feel obliged to uphold the policies of a center, resulting in tension between the providers and parents. In such circumstances, the tension might be alleviated through an open discussion about the harm or benefits to a child of various forms of discipline.

Program directors harbor concerns about ways to work with stressed families

One of the most significant challenges that providers face is serving families experiencing problems related to poverty, substance abuse, and child neglect. In some cases, providers feel that parents are not giving their children proper attention and care. They may find it difficult to avoid being judgmental and to identify family strengths. Providers sometimes have to make hard decisions where there is no one right answer.

> *It's difficult when a parent shows up at the center and you suspect that they've been using a drug. How do you intervene? Do you allow the child to get into the car with that parent? Those are big issues for us.*

Another challenge for programs in the study is reaching single, teenage parents. Successfully influencing young parents to make wise choices and take responsibility can be difficult, complex, and trying. Child care providers find it difficult to engage some mothers in a meaningful relationship based on caring for the child. They worry about the situations of these mothers, especially when they leave home and lack an extended family support network.

Programs serving middle-income families often deal with stresses related to parenting issues and balancing work and family commitments. One informant explains,

> *We do a lot of talking with parents about reducing stress in their children's lives. Many of these parents work 10, 12, 14 hours a day, plus do a lengthy commute. People are on this board and running to activities, and it leaves very few hours to spend with their children. Often we try to say gently, 'your child needs your attention — you need to set aside some time to spend with him.' We try to help parents understand how important their interactions with their child can be, because they're in group care a long time everyday.*

> *We also have many divorce situations where children are reacting to stress and parents may be placing us in the middle of conflicts.*

Families with multiple problems require extra support, time, and energy from providers and other practitioners in child care programs. There are no clearly defined step-by-step procedures for working with families in a variety of complex situations. The challenge is to be able to work individually with families in ways that guide parent decisions regarding their lives and those of their children.

FINDING THREE: CHILD CARE PROVIDERS' TRAINING FOR WORK WITH FAMILIES IS BOTH LIMITED AND HIGHLY VARIABLE.

The successful practice of family-centered child care will, in large part, depend upon the preparation of providers. The personal beliefs and values of these practitioners influence family-program relations (Burton, 1992). Studies have shown that relationship building is critical to the success of various types of programs that work with families (Bruner, 1992; Lopez and Hochberg, 1993; Shartrand, 1996). The research indicating that parents and child care providers are "worlds apart" suggests that much work lies ahead to build appropriate training systems (Kontos and Wells, 1986; Modigliani, 1996).

In the communities where the programs operate, few opportunities exist for family support training from two-year colleges and resource and referral agencies. Most of that training occurs within programs, led by a center director, social worker, or family support coordinator. Occasionally, an outside expert is brought for a workshop. Topics are determined by staff needs and parent concerns. The more common ones focus on communication, parent involvement, and dealing with culturally and linguistically diverse families. Four programs have sought to systematize training through national family support models such as the Parent Services Project and Parents as Teachers. One offers participation in Head Start training. Two others, noted below, have developed their own curriculums, which they are now disseminating to other programs in their community and beyond:

> The Community Lab School for Family-Centered Child Care (Fort Worth, TX), created by the First Texas Council of Camp Fire, holds separate training sessions for center directors and family child care providers on the principles and practice of family-centered child care. The Lab School will include a research component, offered in cooperation with area universities, to assess the overall effectiveness of implementing the School's program model in various sites.
>
> Sheltering Arms (Atlanta, GA) builds on and strengthens the family component of the Child Development Associate (CDA) competencies. For each of the competency areas, trainees learn ways to communicate information about curriculum content to parents, and ways in which parents can contribute to curricular activities. The training program is offered to early childhood practitioners in the community working toward their CDA credentials.

Additionally, some informants point to the lack of trainers in their communities that can meet the needs of providers. One director claims that trainers from two-year colleges in the area tend to focus on theoretical issues and do not have enough ongoing hands-on experiences with children and families. Seasoned practitioners, on the other hand, often lack the frameworks in which they can use their experiences as illustrative examples.

While programs provide staff with opportunities to participate in conferences and workshops, directors talk about the need for more sustained approaches such as regular technical assistance from consultants under contract and daily coaching and modeling from directors and experienced staff. One common way centers ensure continuous learning is through regularly-held staff meetings, during which time providers discuss topics such as communication, being respectful of families, and outreach to parents. In some cases, directors use conference videotapes and articles from professional publications as a springboard for discussion. These discussions provide an important learning experience for providers, who benefit from coaching by their directors or other more experienced staff.

Some directors also feel that available training tends to focus on introductory levels and express the need for training that builds basic as well as advanced skills. One director notes, for example, that seasoned providers do not need more training in making finger puppets but rather in ways of guiding a child whose incarcerated father will be coming home, or ways of helping a boy with leukemia return to the preschool classroom.

Training for family support, however, exists within the context of early childhood training. The latter is equally diverse, reflecting the fragmentation that exists in the field. The three major child care delivery systems — purchase-of service, Head Start, and public schools — differ significantly in their training requirements and qualifications of providers (Morgan, 1998). Providers in this study receive a combination of training from program-developed curriculum, resource and referral agencies, Head Start, two- and four-year colleges, workshops and conferences, and regular staff meetings. Some enter the profession as aides, with little background in early childhood and then work toward their Child Development Associate credential. Others already have a bachelor's or associate degree in education.

When asked about the type of training that would be useful for providers, informants identified the following characteristics:

- Systemic: Providers gain credentials that in turn are linked to compensation and/or transfer to other career pathways

- Comprehensive: Providers learn about child and family development as well as topics related to management and child care policies affecting their work

- Continuous: Providers advance from basic to more specialized knowledge and skills (and in the process, become mentors for others)

- Inclusive: Opportunities for joint training of parents and providers on some topics enable greater communication and trust building between them

- Reinforcing: Providers form networks of support to engage in continuous learning from one's peers.

FINDING FOUR: ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES AND STRUCTURES SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FAMILY-CENTERED PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES.

While training is necessary to build family-centered child care, it alone is insufficient to bring about change. The programs in this study have developed policies that facilitate providers' work with families. They seek to improve the professional status of child care providers and thus support those who are expected to support families. The programs have also succeeded in raising the funds to support family-centered activities. The financial sources come from fee-based services and parent fundraising. For programs serving low-income and single-parent families, contracts with state agencies make it possible to hire additional staff to provide or refer families to other services they need. This, however, does not mean that a family-centered program is feasible only when resources are available. Provider attitudes toward families are a critical ingredient in establishing relationships of trust. Centers and networks can create the environments to reinforce the importance of families and building partnerships.

Programs develop family-focused policies and family involvement activities

Programs support families as well as staff by clearly expressing a family support philosophy and reflecting this in their policies and procedures. The focus on families penetrates multiple aspects of service delivery, from hiring staff from the community who represent the families being served to sponsoring family activities. Inservice training builds staff knowledge and skills to work with families. Programs aim for flexibility so as to meet the wants and needs of families.

Creating a family service coordinator position benefits families and providers

Some programs are fortunate enough to have the resources to hire a family service coordinator. The coordinator serves as a liaison with families, often becoming the person who facilitates parent group meetings. This person shares information with providers and trains them. The coordinator also becomes an important contact for family child care providers to link families with additional support services.

Programs develop mechanisms to recognize and support providers

Programs encourage providers in their work with children and families by recognizing their work and showing appreciation in the way they are treated on a day-to-day basis. The director plays a critical role in this process. A director should be a "hands-on" person, available to the staff and willing to give support and encouragement. Resource and referral agencies and organizations that network with family child care providers link the providers so that they can become part of informal support groups. Additionally, some center-based programs provide opportunities for career advancement, with experienced providers and family services coordinators serving as mentors for newly hired providers and for those in other child care programs.

Programs work for fair compensation in an effort to retain providers

Programs seek the funds to make wages more livable and benefits more comprehensive. If programs are to build sustained relationships with families, they need to retain providers. The field as a whole — and even some programs in this study — experiences high staff turnover rates. Despite the high cost of child care to families, child care workers are still very poorly paid. Seventy percent of the child care work force earns an income below the poverty level (Dean, 1998). The National Association of Child Care Resources & Referral Agencies reports that although many providers are college educated, the average wage in the industry is $6.70 an hour, while the national average for all workers is $11.25. For providers to be respected, they need to be paid comparable wages.

A TRAINING FRAMEWORK FOR FAMILY-CENTERED CHILD CARE

Programs Vary in Training Needs

The practices of the 11 programs suggest common areas for training as well as adaptations to match the environments of child care programs and the types of families that they serve. Differences across child care settings affect the types of practices and training necessary for family-centered child care. For example, more communication between family members and providers occurs in family child care homes than in child care centers. As informants from family child care homes and networks attest, this can create a greater exchange of information. Training can instill the importance of making this an opportunity for providers to share child development information with parents. It can also attune providers to elicit from parents and family members information about their own childrearing values, their children's current mental and physical state, and other important information for the care and education of their children. In centers, where communication is more episodic, providers will need to be trained not only on the content of two-way communication but also on strategies to communicate effectively when time is limited.

Child care in a home setting may present providers with unique obstacles that center providers do not face. Family child care providers can benefit from training about how to manage boundaries and create a balance with parents who have become more like friends or family members than clients. These providers can also improve relationships with parents through consumer satisfaction training that considers their position as independent business owners. Finally, as increasing numbers of providers work alone, out of their homes, they can feel a sense of professional isolation. Training can stimulate continuing professional support by offering providers the opportunity to network with each other and with other service agencies in the community.

Differences in the types of communities and families served will affect practices and training. Providers working with teenage parents will benefit from training on adolescent development and ways to communicate with and motivate young parents to reach their goals. As informants have expressed, because providers often must model parenting practices, they need to have training in sound parenting principles. They also have to know how to act on behalf of young parents with their high schools, and inspire them to complete their schooling. Providers dealing with families where there is documented abuse or neglect in the home will benefit from knowledge about family interventions and case management procedures, and skills related to team work with other professionals who serve the same families.

Training will also need to be relevant to community contexts. Building cultural competence, for example, takes on special meaning in different contexts. In some cases, it is appropriate to emphasize preserving the language and culture of an ethnic group. In others, where communities tend to be highly mixed, training might focus on multicultural, anti-bias approaches to working with children and families (Chang, Muckelroy, Pulido-Tobiassen, 1996).

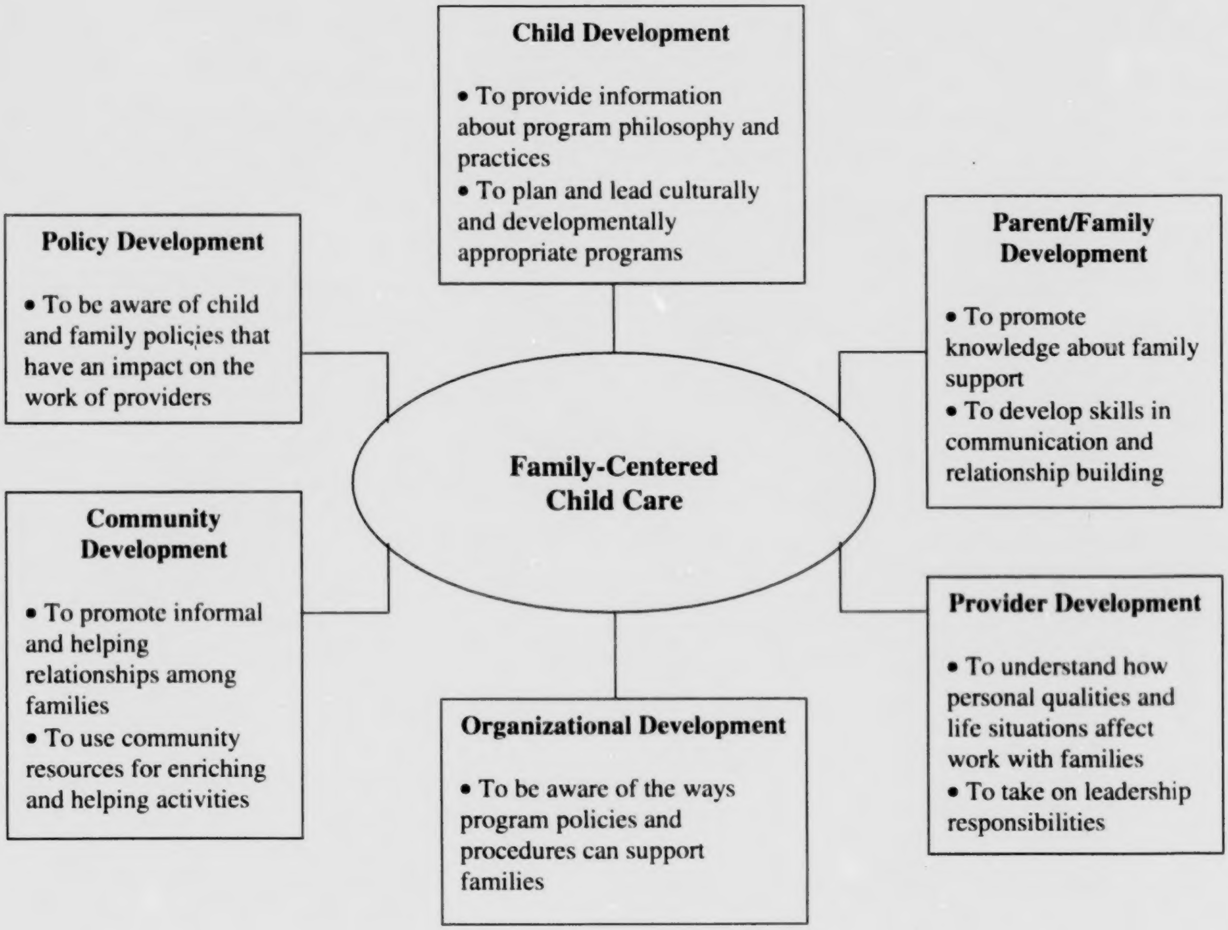
Comprehensive Training Can Support Providers

This research has identified a broad range of promising practices as well as recurring challenges in fostering relationships between families and child care providers. Training and professional development can better prepare providers to develop the relationships that will enrich a child's development. This section offers a framework — illustrated in Figure 1— to prepare child care practitioners to work with families. The programs in this study engage in multiple types of relationships with families and operate in the contexts of broader resources and problems in the child care and early education arena. As such, the framework seeks to provide a comprehensive approach that takes account of the various influences on the parent-provider relationship. It can be adapted to emphasize the priorities of a particular program given its specific circumstances.

The components of the framework include training on the immediate factors impinging on parent-provider relationships (child, family, and provider characteristics); and on the mediating influences on that relationship (organizational arrangements, community resources, and child and family policies). They were derived from the interviews with the program informants, who described front-line practice issues but also understood the effects of community collaboration and policy directives on their programs and their staffs.

Each component of the framework is described below. It consists of three parts: a brief explanation of why training in this area is needed; examples of training topics based either on the practices of programs in this study or informant assessment of desirable knowledge and skills; and examples of practice issues that training can address. The practice issues are direct quotes from the informants. They illustrate some of the difficulties in parent-provider relationships, in which no simple solution exists. Instead, they highlight the need to train providers in problem-solving and reflection. Providers stand to benefit from training and support in making sound judgements.

FIGURE 1: GOALS OF CHILD CARE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES



Family-Centered Child Care

Child Development

- To provide information about program philosophy and practices
- To plan and lead culturally and developmentally appropriate programs

Policy Development

- To be aware of child and family policies that have an impact on the work of providers

Parent/Family Development

- To promote knowledge about family support
- To develop skills in communication and relationship building

Community Development

- To promote informal and helping relationships among families
- To use community resources for enriching and helping activities

Provider Development

- To understand how personal qualities and life situations affect work with families
- To take on leadership responsibilities

Organizational Development

- To be aware of the ways program policies and procedures can support families

• *Child development*
Providers need to be knowledgeable in early child development not only to be competent with children but also to inform parents about the "whys" and "hows" of teacher practices. As mentioned by the informants to this study, such knowledge can strengthen parent confidence in a child care program and facilitates the development of trust. Providers also have to be open to learning from parents and bringing their perspectives into developing plans for an individual child or designing classroom activities. The reciprocal relationship contributes to the building of "social capital" in a child's environment.

Examples of training topics:

- Learning to incorporate parent goals for a child into a provider's practice
- Sharing techniques about discipline clearly and respectfully
- Explaining developmental delays and options for intervention
- Communicating appropriate activities for a child's developmental stage
- Communicating the value of play

Examples of practice issues for training on differing views of child rearing practices:

"When parents ask us why we don't teach this or that, we explain to them what's really important at this age is learning to get along with other people. Some parents just don't understand this."

"Fathers tell their sons not to cry because it is not a manly thing to do, or they teach their sons to be aggressive and to hit back when fights break out."

"Child development theory is western. Much of it is foreign to Latino culture. The issue is one of being able to translate good child development theory in ways that make sense to a culturally diverse population."

"Providers have to know what their hot spots are. They have to ask themselves why they respond to children and parents the way they do. What makes them angry? They need to reflect on their own childhood and the way they were raised and how that might influence their relationships."

• *Parent/family development*
Providers will benefit from training on ways to communicate with and support families. Informants have provided the reasons for the importance of family support. They recognize that parents are the most important figures in their children's lives. Providers can strengthen the bond between parent and child by keeping parents informed of a child's activities and developmental progress. Informants mention that many families are stressed and need respite and support in order to parent well. They acknowledge that families are becoming more diverse, and their needs have to be met in culturally appropriate and respectful ways.

Examples of training topics:

- Applying family support principles
- Managing sensitive communication
- Learning when and how to confront parents constructively
- Organizing parenting sessions
- Promoting learning activities at home
- Utilizing parents as effective volunteers
- Fostering parent leadership

Examples of practice issues for training on communication:

"The day to day work with kids is hard and busy. Then, at the end of the day, the provider has be an active listener, a kind, nurturing person to the parent, who has been stressed all day too. Miscommunication can happen."

"In the Latino population, people don't confront anyone and don't know how to confront effectively. Learning to confront a parent so as to facilitate that parent's getting her own solutions to a problem is a skill that needs to be learned."

Examples of practice issues on diversity and gender:

"It's a challenge to have your program truly match what's happening in your community. The staff is unfamiliar with some of the cultures represented in our program. And we have to address our own concerns about differences and fears about things that are uncomfortable or different."

"There is no separate support group for fathers, which caused debate in our teen parent program. The young women may feel uncomfortable speaking openly in front of the fathers of their children. We know that the mothers sometimes ask their partners not to attend."

- ***Provider development***

The programs in this study pay attention to supporting providers through training, recognition, and improved compensation and benefits. Informants describe work with young children as hard and at times stressful. Training on personal development and professional growth can minimize burnout and support the commitment to young children and families. The New York State Family Development Training and Credentialing Program is an initiative to provide frontline workers with the competencies to work with families. It has developed a set of modules one of which underscores the importance of worker self-empowerment. Some components of this particular module that are relevant to child care providers are listed below in the examples of training topics (Dean, 1995, 1998):

Examples of training topics:

- Overcoming barriers to feeling empowered so that one can work in empowering ways with families
- Planning time well
- Managing stress
- Balancing work and family life
- Establishing a support system
- Asking help from supervisors, co-workers or one's own family members

Examples of practice issues for training on balancing work and family:

"A person's life is enriched by working with families not because of what she does for a family but because the work is about herself—'this is not about them (families) but about me.' As long as the provider sees the relationship as taking care of the family's needs and not her own as well, she will feel that the parent should be grateful to her and feel beholden."

"A lot of times where we have conflict is that the teachers are in the same boat themselves; they're young, they have young children, they're not in a real high paying job, and they may not communicate well with parents."

Examples of practice issues for training on empowerment:

"How do you empower parents and providers who previously have not held decision-making responsibilities? Is empowerment something to be welcomed or feared?"

• ***Organizational development***

Informants consider program responsiveness and flexibility characteristics that facilitate program-provider relationships. Many of the programs have conducted needs assessments in designing their activities with and for parents. At times, however, this type of flexibility is put to the test. One of the sources of tension between programs and families lies in interpreting the boundaries of flexible practice with respect to a program's policies and procedures. Useful training for providers imparts skills on how to negotiate differences on policies such as late pick-up, payment schedules or aspects of daily caregiving.

Examples of training topics:

- Assessing the interests and needs of families
- Handling policy differences and reaching cooperative solutions
- Working as part of a team (providers, family coordinators, and other staff)
- Transferring leadership to parents and training them for it

Examples of practice issues for training on program policies and procedures:

"We try to talk to parents about late payments. They say, 'well you're not working with me on this.' Well, we try to but we also have expenses to maintain."

"All children have to be picked up by 5:30, and there was a family that was chronically late. I tried to be friendly and understanding but I also felt taken advantage of. I am concerned about our staff who have to stay after 5:30."

"Caregivers feel lack of respect when parents are consistently late in picking up their children or when they consistently forget to bring diapers."

Examples of practice issues for training on power relationships:

"Parents are running the advisory board activities. That was hard for me because I felt I needed to have control. I have to know when to keep my mouth closed and let them go with what they've planned and do what they ask me to do."

• *Community development*
Providers need to know the ways to build community support among families and for families. The programs in this study provide opportunities for parents to support each other and to develop leadership skills. Training can inform providers about the ways to encourage informal and helping relationships among families. The programs also point to challenges in supporting highly stressed families. Training can inform providers about comprehensive approaches to human services, the roles of different types of professionals that work with families, and the resources in the community that can help families.

Examples of training topics:

- Helping families develop informal support in the community
- Facilitating parent group meetings
- Knowledge of community resources
- Effective collaboration

Examples of practice issues on developing informal support:

"We try to make our centers the hub of the community or neighborhood. Sometimes we hear the comment, 'We only had 3 parents come.' Figure out what all these parents need. If they only had an hour of discretionary time, and if they went home that was probably the best thing for them to do."

"The families come from different cultural backgrounds. They have a difficult time trying to understand how to relate to each other. They have different perceptions of what is appropriate behavior."

Example of practice issues on supporting stressed families:

"More parents are under more and more stress. Teen mothers are particularly difficult to serve. They get kicked out of their homes when they become pregnant, which means they lose the values and structure that the family provides."

• *Policy development*

Providers need to know about family and child policies that bear upon their work. For example, training informs providers about evolving welfare and education policies and their implications for services to children and families. Equally important is training that builds leadership skills so that providers are champions of children and families and their need for quality care and education.

Examples of training topics:

- Understanding how child care policies at national, state, and local levels affect providers' work and relationships with families
- Learning leadership and advocacy skills
- Engaging parents to support quality child care

Examples of practice issues on the implications of policy for practice:

"Through welfare reform, you're not always going to have parents physically in a program. You have to be open and receptive to parents and their levels of participation."

"When a teen mother gets suspended from school, she loses her child care subsidy. She is supposed to care for the child the days that she is at home. We try to consider what is best for the child and the mother. In many cases that means accepting the child; but we also consider that we are dependent on funding and must follow the regulations on subsidies."

Example of practice issues on advocacy:

"Child care providers are expected to do more than they can in terms of the resources that communities have. We need to get people to vote. We need Washington to put money for children and our communities — that means housing, jobs, health insurance."

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Family-centered child care is a model and a process.

Supporting families is an important part of the work of child care programs. Programs share a vision of family-centered care that embodies supportive attitudes and services and greater involvement in decision making. Turning this vision into the daily routine of caregiving is an ongoing process. This process involves a deliberate design and adaptation of policies, procedures, and activities that are responsive to families being served. It consists of training and supporting staff in their work with families and working on implementation challenges. The challenges lie in negotiating different perspectives on child development, dealing with the lack of time and opportunities for communication, and managing relationships with stressed families. While training can make a difference in helping staff overcome some of these difficulties and gain valuable interpersonal skills, it is either not a high enough priority or it is not available in ways to meet a program's needs. Given that training builds the capacity for family-centered child care, there are two steps to structure training to be more family supportive.

Recommendation: Integrate a family support approach in training.
The experiences of the programs suggest that training in family support principles and practices can guide staff in program-family relations. What is needed is a systematic integration of the family perspective at the various levels of provider training, from in-house activities to the formal training of higher education institutions. Programs can take a proactive role by making their needs known to local training institutions and creating the demand for more courses, workshops, and materials that meet these needs.

Recommendation: Make parents partners in training.
Parents are valuable resources in determining training needs of providers and participating in several aspects of the design and conduct of training (Jeppson and Thomas,1995). They can participate in needs assessments and discussion sessions. They can provide ideas for and review the design of training materials, and they can present the parent's perspective during training. A few of the programs in this study train parents and providers together so that they can better understand each other's perspectives and truly become reciprocal learners.

2. Program leadership is critical to the implementation of family-centered child care.

Program directors influence the way in which programs build connections with families. They are in a position to create opportunities for greater parent involvement and family support and to address the barriers to their accomplishment. Through staff meetings and in-house training, they share their knowledge and attitudes about how to respond to families and also serve as role models for staff. In some programs this leadership role is played by a family support coordinator or lead teacher, who mentor newly hired staff.

Recommendation: Disseminate the problem-solving strategies of exemplary leaders.
The potential exists for increased family-centered child care through peer exchange and mentoring by program directors. This is one area where policy incentives can be developed to promote networking and technical assistance based on the practice knowledge of exemplary program directors and family support coordinators. Professional early childhood associations can

also encourage local networking to share problem-solving strategies. Research can be conducted on specific dilemmas of practice and the different pathways to their resolution. This type of action research can be locally-based, instituted as part of the coursework of those entering the early childhood field or seeking further advancement within it. These researchers can analyze and reflect on the experiences and strategies of program leaders and share their findings with their peers and other programs in the community.

3. **Training on family-related topics focuses on the needs of individual programs and is conducted mainly in-house.**

The programs develop topics for training based on the evolving needs of staff. In-house training can be strengthened through collaboration with other training resources in a community. The programs' potential for mutual learning from other programs has yet to be tapped. A handful of programs, however, are not only using staff meetings as training opportunities but also systematizing the training for their staff and other child care programs in their communities. Collaboration can be taken a step further through joint assessment of community training needs and development of training strategies. Collaboration is a particularly effective strategy when training funds are limited and their optimal use is desirable.

Recommendation: Offer training opportunities across different program auspices.
Better use can be made of existing training opportunities. Policies can encourage inclusive training that brings together providers from Head Start, school programs, family child care, and child care centers. This collaboration would provide a means for programs with limited training resources to gain access to training and promote equity. It provides an opportunity for cross-program networking and learning that can continue beyond the training period. It allows programs with expertise in working with families from culturally diverse backgrounds to share their knowledge with other programs that are less well prepared to deal with the needs of these families. The use of technology can also complement on-site training, providing a means for quick problem-solving and sharing of effective strategies.

4. **Providers deal with a wide range of family concerns, some of which involve complex interpersonal situations.**

Throughout this report examples have been given of the issues that providers experience in their practice. They range from trying to communicate child development principles to parents who share different perspectives to handling relationships with stressed families. Preparing providers to be critical thinkers and problem-solvers and to develop good judgement in working with families is essential in family-centered practice.

Recommendation: Create innovative partnerships between higher education and programs.
Programs in this study report linkages with community colleges and four-year colleges to help providers in their career development. This connection can be expanded to include arrangements whereby courses with a focus on the family grow from practitioner needs and aim to develop better integration between theory and practice. These courses should be taught using one or more formats that encourage problem-solving and reflection such as the case method, internships for preservice students, keeping journal reflections for inservice trainees, and action research.

5. Training focuses on only some of the content areas influencing relations with families.

The more commonly addressed topics focus on communication, cultural diversity, and parent involvement. Program directors, however, point out that the challenges and the conditions favorable to building relationships with families involve organizational, community, and policy dimensions. These dimensions need to be incorporated into training content as well.

Recommendation: Make training comprehensive.
Programs should conduct a comprehensive assessment of their training needs with respect to building relationships with families. The framework in the previous section offers one way of covering a range of training goals — child, family, provider, organization, community, policy — that collectively support family-centered practice. Another model is offered by one of the programs in the study, whereby the CDA competency areas provide a basis for identifying the knowledge and skills that providers should develop not only in their relationships with children but also with parents.

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APPENDIX A:
DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Program Outreach

Several informants from national child care organizations were contacted by phone and asked to name other key organizations and informants in the field of child care. They were also asked to nominate exemplary child care programs with a family focus. These initial phone calls resulted in a comprehensive list of 56 national child care organizations that included professional associations, advocacy organizations, child care information clearinghouses, federal and state offices, and child care research centers. Letters were sent to these organizations requesting nominations for local exemplary child care programs with a family focus. A second mailing, to all members of National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, also requested nominations of family-focused child care programs. These varied outreach strategies resulted in over 60 program nominations.

Sample Selection

Directors of all nominated child care programs were called and asked about the family support services and provider training offered at his or her site, as well as the population of children and families served. After sufficient information about each nominated program was obtained, nine were selected, based on the following criteria: 1) Each program offered a breadth, depth, or innovation of services to families (a wide range of services, intensive services in one area, or a unique approach to serving families) and/or substantial family-centered training for child care staff; 2) programs that were nominated more than once were given priority; and 3) the nine programs selected represented a balance of three major types of child care settings — family day care, center-based child care, and comprehensive family centers. Before the research ended, one of the nine programs closed because of financial reasons, leaving a total of eight programs included in the current report.

A second group of three programs was selected specifically to represent child care programs serving culturally and economically diverse communities. Eleven programs were chosen for the study.

Document Review

The eleven selected child care programs were contacted and asked to send any materials that described their program, including brochures, training materials, program philosophies, mission statements, and other documents. Program profiles were created from this written information. Missing information was noted and asked about in subsequent interviews with each program director.

Interview Procedures

One-hour audio-taped phone interviews were conducted with program directors. Information was gathered about the program's history, philosophy, family-focused services, provider training, and program challenges and successes. Follow-up phone calls with program directors and phone interviews with other staff members were conducted when necessary.

Data Analysis

Information collected through interviews and written material was analyzed for emerging themes within and across programs, resulting in written program profiles and a cross-program summary. Profiles were then sent to program directors requesting feedback to verify that all program information was accurate and complete. Profiles were adjusted accordingly.

APPENDIX B:
PROGRAM PROFILES

Profiles of Family-Centered Child Care Programs

1. Associated Family Child Care Services — Chelsea (Chelsea, Massachusetts)
2. Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Learning Center (Washington, D.C.)
3. Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care (Somerville, Massachusetts)
4. Community Family Development, Inc. (Poughkeepsie, New York)
5. Community Lab School for Family-Centered Child Care (Fort Worth, Texas)
6. Gardner Children's Center (San Jose, California)
7. KCMC Child Development Corporation (Kansas City, Missouri)
8. Los Niños Child Development and Family Program (Napa, California)
9. Pacific Oaks Children's School (Pasadena, California)
10. Sheltering Arms Child Development and Family Support (Atlanta, Georgia)
11. Webster Child Care Center (Webster Groves, Missouri)

Associated Family Child Care Services — Chelsea
Chelsea, Massachusetts

One of 12 programs run by Associated Day Care Services, New England's oldest and largest nonprofit child care provider, Associated Family Child Care Services — Chelsea is a child care agency that coordinates child care delivery in 24 Chelsea and East Boston family child care homes. The program's philosophy is that children's needs are best met by meeting the needs of their families at the same time. Strong community collaborations and a commitment to quality family child care enables this Chelsea agency to offer professional child care training, parenting classes, literacy efforts, social events, and ongoing support services for children, parents, and caregivers.

Program Contact	Wayne Ysaguirre, Program Director
Location (Administration)	80 Everett Avenue, Suite 215 Chelsea, MA 02150 Phone: (617) 889-4884 Fax: (617) 889-0634
Number of Sites	24 family child care homes in Chelsea and East Boston
Year Program Began	1982
Number Served	100 children/75-90 families
Population Served	African-American, Caucasian, Latino and Vietnamese; low-income families; mostly single parents
Age Range of Children	Two months to twelve years
Staff-to-Child Ratio	1: 6
Number of Staff Members	5 in central office, 24 home-based caregivers
1995 Budget	$500,000 (excluding administrative overhead costs covered by parent organization Associated Day Care Services)
Primary Funding Sources	Massachusetts Department of Social Services, Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance, United Way of Massachusetts Bay, private and corporate donations

Points of Distinction

- **Offers comprehensive support for home-based caregivers:** Associated Family Child Care Services — Chelsea coordinates child enrollment, offers ongoing professional child care training, sets up parent lending libraries, and provides social workers to help home-based caregivers meet individual family needs.

- **Collaborates with other agencies:** The program collaborates closely with numerous community agencies to enhance its outreach efforts and to provide training for caregivers. It also works with these agencies to streamline the referral process and to advocate for improved social and health services.

- **Serves disadvantaged families:** The Associated Family Child Care Services system serves primarily low-income families who receive child care subsidies. Many of the families are single-parent, some involve foster parents or grandparents raising children, and some have been referred to the system as a part of the DSS family preservation program for children considered to be at-risk.

Associated Family Child Care Services — Chelsea
Chelsea, Massachusetts

Program Background

Associated Family Child Care Services — Chelsea was formed in 1982 to meet the large demand for child care in Chelsea and East Boston and to create a professional support system for independent home-based caregivers. Associated Day Care Services is the parent organization of Associated Family Child Care Services — Chelsea (hereafter we refer to Associated Family Child Care Services — Chelsea as Associated-Chelsea, not to be confused with parent organization Associated Day Care Services). The 40-year-old parent organization runs 12 sites: nine child care centers and three child care "systems," of which Associated-Chelsea is one. The system is a network of home-based caregivers running their own businesses under contract with Associated. The benefits of connecting with the agency include receiving supplies, record-keeping assistance, and professional training, plus the ability to serve families involved with the state's Department of Social Services family preservation program.

Community and Participant Characteristics

Associated-Chelsea serves the communities of Chelsea and East Boston, low-income urban neighborhoods near and in Boston. One strength exhibited by many families in these communities is having multiple generations living within blocks of each other, providing "layers" of people to help raise children. Approximately half of the families served by the agency are Latino (primarily from Central America), with African-American, Caucasian, and Vietnamese families constituting the other half.

The system serves primarily low-income families who receive child care subsidies through the state's Department of Transitional Assistance or occupy slots contracted by the Department of Social Services. Many of the families are single-parent, some involve foster parents or grandparents raising children, and some have been referred to the system as a part of the DSS family preservation program for children considered to be at-risk.

Collaborations

Associated-Chelsea participates in two major collaborations. The first is with the Chelsea Early Childhood Project, which brings together all the child care programs in the community, including Head Start, the public schools, and for-profit and nonprofit child care centers. The second is with the East Boston Community Partnerships for Children, through which the agency is linked to the Chelsea and East Boston Neighborhood Health Centers.

Both collaborations enable the program to expand its outreach efforts and inform caregivers and families of the resources available to them in Chelsea and East Boston. Partnering with community groups leads to improved sharing of local resources, enhanced training offerings for caregivers and parents, as well as more effective parent advocacy services. Working with the East Boston Community Partnerships for Children facilitates providing families with medical information and referrals to doctors.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

In the brochure it distributes to parents, Associated Day Care Services claims that its "rich history, strong community collaborations, and extensive funding partnerships allow us to provide comprehensive family support services, initiate innovative projects, and play a key role in shaping public child care policy." While supporting caregivers and their efforts to support the family, Associated-Chelsea, through the Family Development Department, also provides support services and other family-focused activities. The staff at the office and the caregivers in the system convey to parents that they are partners in their child's care.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

Every six months, a developmental assessment or progress report is completed on each child. The reports are sent home to parents, who then have the opportunity to discuss them with caregivers. Caregivers use these discussions to build relationships with parents and identify concerns.

Associated-Chelsea's family child care homes are small enough that caregivers are able to work closely with children and families and learn the individual needs of children and their parents. Caregivers focus on developing trusting relationships with families and supporting them. Parents and children often eat meals with caregivers, and parents frequently discuss child-rearing issues with caregivers. Caregivers sometimes visit children at their homes, especially to offer support if a child is sick. Some receive visits from older children they once cared for.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

Parent education occurs on two levels at Associated-Chelsea: through the agency directly and by the caregivers in the network. The agency offers a monthly parent training series with topics selected in accordance with interests expressed on parent surveys. Presenters are frequently members of the staff and are always from within the community; offering parents that sort of "insider" perspective they find most valuable. Individual caregivers are a valuable source of parent education, answering questions about teething, sleeping habits, and other developmental subjects. Caregivers attempt to offer parents the sort of knowledge and advice that they might get from a mother or other supportive family member, helping fill some of the roles left empty in the fragmented families they serve.

Associated also has a variety of literacy initiatives, including a parent lending library and a Family Literacy Day with activities for both children and parents. To support literacy development for parents and children, parent lending libraries based in the family child care homes accommodate parents who would not have time to borrow or return books at other libraries.

Fostering Parent-to-Parent Relationships

Through a grant from the Children's Trust Fund, Associated-Chelsea offers parents opportunities to come together for dinners in the office, providing child care so that parents can have discussion topics ranging from nutrition to parents' expectations of children. These and other social gatherings give parents a chance to get together with other parents who live in the same community and speak the same language, to talk about the realities of raising young children in the inner city and build a peer support system.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

Parents participating in the program play an active role in planning the parent training series' workshops. Parents meet to discuss which topics they feel most need to be addressed, identified through interest surveys, and the program develops the training around parents' concerns. Associated-Chelsea used to assign parents one caregiver when they first came to the agency. Today, recognizing that parents have preferences, the agency gives parents a choice of caregivers. Parents visit the caregivers and choose the one with whom they feel most comfortable.

Meeting Family Needs

Associated-Chelsea gives parents the opportunity to complete surveys on the agency as a whole and on their individual caregiver. Parents have the chance to meet with program staff members twice a year to discuss their child's progress. This also serves as a time for parents to share their impressions of the program and for the staff to share information about the program. The program uses parent evaluations and meetings to guide its own actions, from mediating a parent-caregiver conflict to determining how to allocate resources. As parents engage in such activities as applying for citizenship or taking ESL or child development courses, caregivers offer support and act as positive role models. They show parents that it is possible to balance the demands of work, family, and self-improvement, and achieve their goals.

Associated-Chelsea has a part-time licensed social worker and two social work interns at its administrative office to support families in the program and act as their advocates. Interns will accompany parents on visits to the doctor if requested by parents and are available for home visits or informal conversations. The program is very active in helping parents obtain child care vouchers from the state's Department of Transitional Assistance.

Staff

The office staff includes the program director; one part-time licensed social worker, two social work interns, two family child care coordinators, and an administrative assistant.

The caregivers working with Associated-Chelsea are residents of East Boston and Chelsea and are recruited primarily through word of mouth. After expressing their interest through attending open training offered to the community as a whole, those interested in becoming caregivers go through a screening and training process. The agency checks references, visits candidates' homes, holds extensive conversations to make sure candidates truly understand what they are taking about, and links potential caregivers with the program's current caregivers. Candidates must also complete an internship with an experienced caregiver in the network. The final acceptance decision is made collectively by the program's caregivers and the office staff. This entire process takes about six months. Caregivers who contract with the agency generally maintain their association for an average of six years.

Professional Development

Once caregivers are admitted into the network, they have access to ongoing training held at the Chelsea office. The program offers monthly evening workshops in both English and Spanish; topics range from nutrition to play therapy. The program also makes a point of passing along to caregivers in the network all information it receives from resource and referral agencies and private training providers.

Caregivers are given the option to attend courses free of charge at two local community colleges. The cost of continuing education for caregivers is covered by fundraising efforts through the two community collaborations mentioned earlier. The agency has contracted with these colleges to offer some courses in Spanish.

Training for Family Support

Believing that it cannot serve a child without looking at the whole family, Associated-Chelsea has always included family support in its mission. The concept of caring for an entire family is a fundamental piece of caregiver training. Some training focuses on communication with parents, primarily to ensure that the care of the child is consistent in both the caregiver's and the parents' homes, but also because talking to parents — asking questions and listening — is one way to show respect for and support families. During communication training, caregivers do role-playing activities in which they use examples of communication issues that have arisen in their own experience with parents and act them out with other caregivers. Aspects of communication covered in training include confidentiality and how gossip differs from supportive communication.

Challenges and Next Steps

Working hard to become or remain self-sufficient, many parents find it difficult to make the time to participate in activities sponsored by the program, and low attendance at some events is a result. The program approaches this challenge by asking parents how it can help them in their parenting role and ensuring that the events and workshops offered are shaped by the interests and needs of the parents and families involved. In addition, if an event is geared toward a parents-only audience, the program provides child care.

Language is another issue constantly faced by Associated-Chelsea and its caregivers. The program is basically bilingual (English and Spanish), but it must keep up with the changing language needs of participating families. For instance, the program needs caregivers able to communicate with and understand the growing Cambodian and Vietnamese population.

Some of the parents in the Associated program are referred to the agency by the Department of Social Services (DSS) because of issues of abuse or neglect, and caregivers and the agency as a whole face many challenges in dealing with the issues of these families. One way that the program has responded to this challenge is by developing a close relationship with the DSS. The two entities consult with each other frequently and rely heavily on one another for cooperation in helping families and making referrals. Another approach has been to use a part-time licensed social worker and two social work interns to work with families and be their advocates.

Associated-Chelsea is looking for funding for programs that focus on fun family outings such as field trips to local museums. The goal is to provide the monetary resources and transportation to introduce parents to places in the community conducive to family play, discovery, and togetherness.

Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Learning Center
Washington, D.C.

Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Learning Center, located in a racially and socioeconomically mixed neighborhood of Washington, D.C., operates a full-day comprehensive child care program, a school-age before- and after-school program, and offers a home-visiting program, Healthy Families, for first-time mothers, mostly teenagers. It is an example of a family-oriented, community-based organization that has evolved and expanded to meet the changing needs of the population it serves.

Program Contact	Beatriz Otero, Director
Location (Administration)	1420 Columbia Road, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20009 Phone: (202) 332-4200 Fax: (202) 745-2562
Number of Sites	One
Year Program Began	1986
Number Served	Child care program — 75 children; before- and after-school program — 120 children; Healthy Families program — 40 families
Population Served	Low- and moderate-income working families; 68% Latino, 20% African-American, 10% bicultural, and 2% Caucasian
Age Range of Children	Birth to age 14
Staff-to-Child Ratio	Varies according to age from 4:1 to 10:1
Number of Staff Members	45 full- and part-time staff
1995 Budget	$1,000,000
Primary Funding Sources	Nearly 50 different sources, including local government, foundations, corporate sponsors, fundraising campaigns, and tuition fees

Points of Distinction:

- **Hires early childhood educators from Latin America:** The philosophy of the program is to hire early childhood educators from the community; they are often recruited from the parent pool, the majority of which is from Latin America. The recruited parents have teaching degrees from their own countries and the director provides language training to upgrade their English and child care skills.

- **Varied training methods:** Calvary uses several different training methods, including role-playing, site visiting, and mentoring. Calvary was modeled on the open classrooms used by a nearby Virginia center, which the staff visits to observe similarities and differences. Mentoring within the center is done through a lead teacher, who works closely with someone working on a Child Development Associate credential.

- **Evolution from child care center to family support center:** A notable feature of the Calvary Learning Center is its evolution from a provider of child care to an institution that offers a wide variety of family support services. Calvary's program offerings include a youth leadership program where community youth from ages 16 to 19 are hired to assist the staff.

Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Learning Center
Washington, D.C.

Program Background

The Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Learning Center (hereafter referred to as Calvary) was founded in 1986 as a small child care center serving children ages three and four. In 1995, through a generous corporate donation, it expanded into a building of 73,000 square feet. Calvary now oversees four programs that serve over 200 children. The Center's Bilingual Early Childhood Program serves children ages two to five from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The School Age Program offers services before school and after-school and during school vacations to children ages five to 15. In 1996, a Junior High component was added in response to parents' requests for supervised activities for this age group. Calvary's Family Institute offers family counseling, parenting workshops, play therapy, social service referrals, school/family linkages, health screenings, and support to the Center's Parents' Association. Healthy Families, D.C. provides new mothers with intensive home visitation and support for the first two years.

Community and Participant Characteristics

Calvary is located in the Columbia Heights area of Washington, D.C., and serves families from surrounding communities. Center participants are primarily from low-income, working families, a majority of which is headed by single mothers. The ethnic composition of center participants is 68% Latino, 28% African-American, 10% bicultural, and 2% Caucasian. About 75% of the children at Calvary are subsidized by various D.C. government child care subsidies, including subsidies for working poor families and for mothers making the transition from welfare to training and work.

Collaborations

Calvary has many collaborations with other community-based organizations such as the Washington Child Development Council, an advocacy organization for child care providers; and the Family Support Collaborative, a group of nine agencies that have formed an alliance to work for child welfare, especially cases of child abuse and neglect, through child development centers. As described above, Calvary serves as a site for Healthy Families, D.C., a collaborative effort with both Latino and African-American prenatal health care organizations to provide home visiting to young Latino and African-American mothers. The Center promotes educational exchanges with other entities in an effort to increase bicultural awareness among program participants. The director feels that it is important to provide children with the opportunity to reach beyond the boundaries of their own communities. Finally, Calvary encourages students from a local art institute to provide on-site art education.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

Since its inception, Calvary has always provided a nurturing educational environment for children and families, holding the belief that "you can't be successful in the classroom if you don't look at the whole child, including the family." Now the program operates on a family strengths model, examining each family's positive attributes, and drawing on them to enhance family life.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

Parents are welcome to observe at Calvary whenever they wish; they attend regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences twice a year, and have monthly parent meetings. According to the director, the key to successful parent-program relations is the level of professionalism with which teachers work with parents. The strong bicultural orientation of the program demands that the staff break down preconceived notions of behavior and try to treat all parents as equals.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

Parent education is coordinated through the Family Institute, a parent-generated organization that sponsors workshops and lectures to provide information and support on topics that the organization feels are important to parents as a group.

Fostering Parent-to-Parent Relationships

At Calvary, parent-to-parent relationships emerge over time. In addition to the informal daily contacts that parents have with each other, the Parents Association organizes parent socials, sometimes around a holiday theme. Parents with common interests meet at Family Institute workshops. The director feels that the most encouraging parent relations she has observed are across racial lines. She believes that the bicultural parent friendships that develop are healthy for the parents themselves and serve as good role models for their children.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is an integral component of Calvary's program. First and foremost, Calvary recruits parents within the community or whom already have children enrolled at the Center to become teachers and volunteers. Second, at least two parents serve on the Board of Directors for the school. Third, the Parent Association at Calvary operates as a leadership team to organize holiday events, fundraisers, and staff appreciation days. It provides input to the Family Institute regarding parents issues and concerns.

Meeting Family Needs

The Institute provides social service referrals, crisis intervention, developmental and health screenings, and assists in home-school relations for individual families. A primary goal of the Family Institute is to link families with community resources in order to obtain direct services. Calvary also maintains a fund to be used for emergency family assistance such as housing, tuition, and transportation.

Staff

Calvary has a total of 45 full- and part-time teachers. It actively recruits Latino teachers from the parent population, seeking parents who have teacher training from Latin American countries and helping them validate their credits in the United States. Four of the teachers have B.A. equivalents; another four have equivalent associate's degrees. The staff is composed of 33 Latinos, 7 African-Americans, 4 Caucasians, and one Asian-American. There are three full-time family support workers for the Healthy Families component.

Professional Development

Most staff development is held in house and consists of bringing in qualified speakers to address health, child abuse and neglect, and other child development related topics. In 1996 Calvary spent $10,000 for staff development, focusing on moving from an individual classroom model to an open classroom model using a creative curriculum. Calvary's staff training priorities include group management and discipline in the classroom, multicultural and bilingual education, and the development of teacher-made materials. Because of the open classroom model, there are many mentoring opportunities available to teachers in training, as well as high school students and graduates who wish to volunteer at the Center.

Training for Family Support

Most family support training is conducted informally and as issues arise. According to the director, it is crucial to reflect internally the behavioral standards of respect, trust, caring, and honesty, so that community members have good role models. Teachers are trained to treat all parents equally, and without racial or class bias.

The Healthy Families home visitors training, provided by Healthy Families, America, is separate from the in-house staff training conducted at Calvary. Home visitors attend an intensive two-week training session prior to beginning their visits; they continue to have regular training meetings throughout the year.

Challenges and Next Steps

A six-million-dollar capital campaign is underway to complete renovations on the space donated to them in 1995. Once renovated, Calvary will expand to include: an infant-toddler program with early Head Start; a healthy families center, to expand the home visiting program; a larger space for the before-school and after-school programs, including a dance room, a technology lab, an art room, a library, and a study for homework; and a space to rent to other organizations that are compatible with Calvary's mission as a full-service family support center.

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care
Somerville, Massachusetts

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care recruits and trains low-income women to become home-based caregivers who offer subsidized child care to area residents. The program fosters close ties between caregivers and the families they serve, creating a sort of extended family network; this offers consistency and stability to the lives of families that might otherwise lack support. With a focus on prevention, the main office of the program offers families counseling, mental health referrals, parenting groups, and other supportive services.

Program Contact	Elise Weygand, Program Manager
Location (Administration)	187 Central Avenue Somerville, MA 02145 Phone: (617) 623-8555 Fax: (617) 623-5014
Number of Sites	54 family child care homes in Cambridge and Somerville
Year Program Began	1971
Number Served	230 children
Population Served	Fifty percent minority (African-American, Haitian, Latino); low-income and at-risk families, teen parents
Age Range of Children	Eight weeks to five years
Staff-to-Child Ratio	Preschool 1:7; family child care homes average 1:6
1995 Budget	$1.2 million
Primary Funding Sources	Catholic Charities North, Massachusetts Department of Social Services, and the United Way

Points of Distinction

- **Addresses community needs:** Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care addresses two major needs of the community it serves: employment for residents and child care services. The program recruits, trains, and supports low-income women as home-based caregivers and thereby offers more jobs and more affordable child care to the community.

- **Focuses on prevention:** Recognizing that its caregivers frequently serve families dealing with difficult circumstances, Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care focuses on prevention and early intervention. The program aims for the timely delivery of basic support for families and provides counseling and mental health referrals at its main offices.

- **Tailors programs to fit families' needs:** Child care subsidies enable low-income working families to participate in Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care's services. Families are also eligible for "supportive" care — comprehensive family services including counseling and referrals — when there is documented abuse or neglect in the home. In addition, the program offers services specifically for teen parents.

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care
Somerville, Massachusetts

Program Background
Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care started in 1971, after Cambridge Community Services and the Mystic Avenue Housing Project identified two important needs for their residents as access to child care services and employment opportunities. Addressing both needs, the program's goals are to provide quality child care and to recruit and train low-income women to become home-based caregivers.

The parent organization of Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care is Catholic Charities North, a local community service organization. The program provides 54 family child care homes with an array of services, including assistance with licensure, family intake and assessment, matching children to available spaces, and referrals to information resources. The program also offers caregivers guidance, professional development training, and ongoing support.

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care offers "basic care" services to low-income families, "supportive care" services to children experiencing abuse or neglect, and teen parent child care. Children may also attend a preschool at the program's main location. The program organizes parent group activities, arranges counseling, case management, and home visits with a social worker for families.

Community and Participant Characteristics
Cambridge and Somerville are ethnically diverse and densely built towns on the outskirts of Boston. Most families have strong ethnic roots; many arrived as part of the recent influx of immigrants from Latin America and Southeast Asia. The strains of urban life and often, single parenting, make child rearing in these blue collar neighborhoods difficult. Many residents are eligible for state subsidies that give them better access to quality child care.
Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care serves primarily low-income, working families, as well as children at-risk referred by the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. About one-third of the families in the program have been referred due to abuse or neglect in the home.

Collaborations
The Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care program staff works with two offices of the Massachusetts's Department of Social Services and with area agencies and hospitals to evaluate potential needs in the communities and provide early intervention and child development services, as well as treatment for medical, mental health, and sexual abuse problems. Individual cases frequently require collaboration with several different entities, depending on the family's background, needs, and mobility. The program also partners with various agencies to provide training and workshops for caregivers and families in the program. It arranges training delivered by professionals representing diverse fields and agencies; its goal is to expose caregivers and families to a wide variety of services and to help them become more trusting of the services and those delivering them.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care recognizes that caregivers have a major impact on the children they care for during the hours they are together, but affirms parents as the primary influence in a child's life. The program's guiding belief, "day care is a family affair," is embodied in caregiver relationships with parents, and caregivers also encourage parents to play an active role in the program.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

Program participants often view their child's caregivers as extended family members. Caregivers bring consistency and stability to the lives of families that might otherwise lack these supportive qualities. Many children develop a close bond with their caregiver and stay in the same child care home until they begin school. Caregivers are trained and encouraged to help families through difficult periods and to treat parents with respect and love in a spirit of partnership. Program participants agree that strong parent-provider ties enhance the quality of their children's care.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care strengthens parenting knowledge and skills through demonstration and instruction. Caregivers model parenting techniques with their own children and the children they care for in their homes; they share what they have learned from experience and training about child rearing to help parents be more effective.

The program is rediscovering the preventive impact of specific family support activities, especially parent education workshops. After halting such workshops in the late 1980s due to time and budget constraints and an increased need for therapeutic responses, staff members have shifted back to a preventive approach, realizing that parent education can deter parenting stresses from developing into problems. The program's parent education component includes monthly workshops, parent and parent-child groups, and individual family consultation. Attendance and enthusiasm for the program's parent activities, which are coupled with free food and transportation, are unusually high.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care benefits from a core of parents who are not only actively involved with their caregivers, but also look for ways to contribute their time and efforts to the overall organization. The program recently re-established a Parent Advisory Board with three key responsibilities: to evaluate services, improve parent-provider communication, and organize parent activities.

Meeting Family Needs

Focusing on prevention and early intervention, Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care offers individual therapy, parent-child therapy, parenting groups, child socialization groups, and more comprehensive assessments depending on the needs of the child and family. For example, the "supportive" care for a highly stressed family could include child care services, transportation to and from child care, individual child therapy, monthly parent visiting, and case management.

The program views intensive therapy as a vital component of family support; approximately 10 percent of the children in the program utilize individual and family therapy provided by licensed social workers.

Due to the high number of families under protective services, Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care commonly refers children and families to other agencies in the community for additional services. The program's aim is to identify issues and refer families to services before problems become too hard to handle. The program encourages communication among the different caregivers working with the family to ensure that they all reinforce the same messages. Part of this effort involves providers of social services consulting with caregivers to make them aware of the social worker's efforts, and informing the caregiver how to work with the child.

To further meet the needs of its constituency and facilitate understanding and communication between parents and caregivers, the program has recruited Spanish-speaking and Haitian caregivers.

Staff

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care is run by a program manager overseeing six staff coordinators who focus on supporting about 60 home-based caregivers. Three full-time licensed social workers help caregivers meet the non-child care needs of their families by delivering or arranging for additional support services. The half-day preschool employs four part-time teachers responsible for the school year-based program. Two secretaries and six part-time drivers further support service delivery.

Coordinators ensure that caregivers are up to date with licensing regulations and that they use developmentally appropriate curricula. The central staff also works with caregivers to support and mediate parent-caregiver communication, caregiver-child relationships, and child-to-child interactions.

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care screens potential caregivers, and many stay with the program for a long time. The program primarily recruits new caregivers through word-of-mouth from other caregivers. In response to growing immigrant populations and children with special needs, more proactive efforts are made to recruit caregivers with specific skills, ethnic backgrounds, and language abilities. Half of the central staff lives in the Cambridge/ Somerville area, and many caregivers are able to communicate with the families they serve in their native tongue.

Professional Development

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care's program manager attributes the high rate of staff retention to the skill-building and career progression opportunities provided by the program. The program's professional development includes monthly workshops, which both caregivers and parents may attend, covering a variety of topics, some standard and some chosen to meet a group's expressed needs.

Through a unique collaboration with Bunker Hill Community College, caregivers and parents may take classes which count toward their early childhood education degree. The program hires instructors and provides on-site courses with curricula approved by Bunker Hill, and the college gives attendees credit for taking these courses. In addition, the program helps caregivers obtain their Child Development Association (CDA) credential via its monthly workshops, on-site courses, and inservice training or by helping them find training in the community. Its CDA support group helps candidates pull together their portfolios for accreditation and set individual goals. Instructors observe caregivers and give them feedback while peers offer support.

Training for Family Support

Cambridge/Somerville's primary means of training for family support is monthly workshops in response to needs identified by caregivers. Communication between parent and child or parent and caregiver are perennial workshop topics. Other workshops address the issues and unique concerns of specific groups, such as how to work with teen parents or families affected by HIV/AIDS. The workshops succeed in giving caregivers new insights, but also teach them to trust their own knowledge in caring for children and to respect the views of parents who know their own child best.

Challenges and Next Steps

The decentralized nature of family child care delivery means that there is one primary contact at each site for both child care and family support. This simplifies family support in some ways, but when working alone, caregivers find it difficult to balance attention to the children with attention to families. Family support efforts may take a back seat to the demands of children, many of whom require special attention due to abuse or neglect at home.

Meanwhile, the organization as a whole must compete with for-profit child care centers that drive down its reimbursement rates. At the same time, state contracts now include more spaces for "supportive" care, which means that caregivers have more challenging children in their homes.

Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care's program manager comments that part of providing family support is knowing how and when to access outside services. Although it takes time, coordination, and a willingness for different agencies to really work together and understand each other's goals and capabilities, caregivers require this sort of information to better identify family needs and match them to available services. Collaborating with state agencies remains a challenge, however, as some refer children long after an issue is apparent, making successful intervention more difficult.

A final challenge is to encourage more "professionalized" practice, involving such elements as caregivers' earning degrees and receiving ongoing training, without creating a business-like atmosphere in the home or sacrificing the informal, family-like feeling that can make family child care homes so effective. Despite these challenges, Cambridge/Somerville Family Day Care is proud to provide job opportunities and training to the community and plans to continue its emphasis on prevention and increase its parent education offerings.

Community Family Development, Inc.
Poughkeepsie, New York

Community Family Development, Inc.(CFD) is based on the philosophy of providing support and assistance to families. Reflecting this philosophy, CFD brings together a wide range of services for families: child care, health and food services, parenting education, a teen parent program, transportation to and from school for older children and teen parents, resource and referral services, and on-site counseling. The center serves children from six weeks up to age 12, enabling all siblings in a family to attend the same child care center, thus solving a logistical problem for parents who work or are in school. It also has an on-site kindergarten and teen parent program.

Program Contact	Linda Sella, Executive Director
Location	269 Mill Street (north site)/260 Mill Street (south site) Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 Phone: (914) 471-5301 Fax: (914) 471-6992
Number of Sites	Two (across the street from each other)
Year Program Began	1971
Number Served	165 children/115 families
Population Served	African-American, Caucasian, Jamaican, Latino; low- to middle-income families; predominantly single parents, some teen parents
Age Range of Children	Six weeks to 12 years
Staff-to-Child Ratio	Infants 1:4; toddlers 1:5; preschool 1:7; school-age 1:10
1995 Budget	$909,000
Primary Funding Sources	New York Department of Social Services, City of Poughkeepsie (Community Development Block Grant), United Way, parent fees

Points of Distinction

- **Meets community needs:** Community Family Development (CFD) meets community needs by providing child care for low-income families; nearly 97 percent of the participants receive subsidies.

- **Collaborates with the school district:** CFD and the school district work together to provide child care: public school teachers teach half-day prekindergarten in CFD classrooms, then CFD teachers provide extended-day child care in the afternoon. The program also runs a teen parent program in collaboration with the school district, offering child care, parent education classes, and support groups.

- **Promotes staff development:** CFD covers 50 percent of tuition fees for staff members attending a post-secondary institution. The program offers career opportunities for local residents, especially those without college degrees: the program recruits classroom aides from the community and promotes them after they gain some experience.

Community Family Development, Inc.
Poughkeepsie, New York

Program Background

Community Family Development (CFD) opened in 1971 as a child care center offering comprehensive services to children and families. Social services funding dwindled after about 10 years, however, rapidly reducing CFD's extensive services. The cuts affected the center's support services, education programming, staff training, and wages. Director Linda Sella began at the center in 1984, and has succeeded in raising the necessary funds to allow the center to operate at a full-service level again.

A 22-member volunteer Board of Directors composed of four parents and other members of the community creates CFD policy, has fiscal responsibility for the center, and oversees the program's staff. To meet its goal of making quality services available to the community, CFD recently merged with another local child care program. As the director notes, the merger took place in an environment of limited child care funding, where not every center was going to survive. The merger, which is the genesis of CFD's north and south sites located across the street from each other, enabled the centers to cut some costs through consolidation while maintaining the caliber of its services.

Community and Participant Characteristics

The city of Poughkeepsie is culturally diverse and economically depressed, but is actively trying to improve conditions for residents. To combat a high unemployment rate, the city has initiated several training programs and even opened a computer center in a mall for walk-in computer training. The African-American community shows its commitment to those growing up in the city through a program in which male residents act as mentors for young men. CFD's participants are representative of the larger community. The majority of the families are African-American and English-speaking. Many families earn low incomes and are headed by single parents; 97 percent receive child care subsidies.

Collaborations

Community Family Development collaborates with the Poughkeepsie public school system. The school district pays prekindergarten teachers to teach the public school's half-day prekindergarten curriculum in CFD classrooms and the CFD teachers continue to offer care and learning activities for the rest of the day. The on-site prekindergarten enables children to remain in one location for the day, a convenient arrangement for parents who work or are in school. CFD also collaborates with the school district in the delivery of a teen parent program. The school district teaches pregnancy prevention and CFD offers child care and parenting education classes.

CFD collaborates with many other community organizations and agencies, including the state's family services and child protection agencies, the Child Development Council (a resource and referral agency), the YMCA/YWCA, and local universities and colleges. In addition, CFD writes joint grant proposals with other local child care centers to expand their services to more families.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

Community Family Development's brochures describe it as "a center where children and families can find support and assistance for successful living." CFD is based on the philosophy that family-centered child care provides the continuity between home and center that children need for healthy development. The program focuses on the family and brings together a range of services: child care, health and food services, parenting education, transportation, and resource and referral. By understanding family circumstances, CFD aims to help build family stability. On-site social workers provide counseling to families.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

A noteworthy feature of CFD's services is its approach to working with parents whose children need developmental services. CFD uses a team approach in which parents are encouraged to bring friends, relatives, and others important in the child's life to discuss a child's development with the center's teachers, social workers, and family specialists. The parent-team conference often starts with asking parents how things are going at home; answering this question helps parents identify concerns themselves. Then the team can offer suggestions to help parents resolve problems and parents can feel that they are collaborating instead of facing a formidable group of experts. CFD's goal is for parents to trust program staff members and staff competency, making it easier to work with families and to identify and arrange for the services children need.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

CFD's team of three parent educators holds classes on parenting issues and life skills management. Its social worker runs informational support groups for parents on topics for which parents identify a need. Some groups focus on issues that concern all parents, such as toilet training, discipline, and sibling rivalry; other groups are aimed at smaller groups of parents dealing with specific issues such as grief. The teen parent program offers an eight-week, two-hours-per-week "Baby and Me" class with mandatory attendance for mothers to receive free child care. "Parents' Night Out" offers informal parent education and support in a fun setting, attracting parents who might not be excited about so-called "parenting classes."

Fostering Parent-to-Parent Relationships

Community Family Development fosters relationships among parents through its parent support groups. By matching parents with similar interests or concerns in groups, the program facilitates the development of peer support systems. CFD's Parents' Night Out provides respite care for children in the evening so parents can socialize. Recognizing that the program's teen parent population was very isolated, CFD introduced field trips especially for teen parents in order to encourage relationships among them. The program organizes fun activities for families throughout the year; they often involve meals and are quite popular.

Having parents on the Board of Directors also encourages parent networks. Parents who are on the board share information with other parents and help them understand how the program works, what it is doing, and why.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement
Community Family Development calls itself a "parent-owned center." To encourage parents' active involvement and sense of personal influence on the program, CFD regularly asks parents to tell staff members and administrators what they want the center to do and be. In addition, parents elect the 22-member Board of Directors, which includes four of their peers; thus, parents have a direct impact on the policy and decisions affecting the center and its services.

Meeting Family Needs
A major issue for parents with children placed at CFD is trying to establish economic self-sufficiency. Parents cannot afford to give up child care, since that affects their potential to find a job or enroll in training programs; at the same time, the program cannot afford to provide child care without receiving payment. To help families struggling to pay for child care, the program has developed a scholarship fund using money from the United Way, the city of Poughkeepsie, and federal block grants to pay for child care. In return for these scholarships, parents must report back to CFD on the status of their employment. Staff members comment that sometimes the program seems like an employment agency, the two are so closely linked.

To help simplify the lives of working parents and ease transportation concerns, CFD provides transportation to and from the public schools for school-aged children as well as teen parents and provides many services on site. For example, speech therapists come to the center to work with children who need extra help, and the school district carries out developmental screening at the center. In response to the busy schedules of parents, the program offers parent education and support groups in the evenings, during parents' lunch hours, and at other times convenient for them to attend. The center often provides food at activities so parents do not have to rush home to prepare a meal. A CFD social worker does occasional home visits in addition to providing individual support and arranging support groups. The program also refers families to other community agencies when necessary.

Initiated five years ago, the teen program at CFD offers special classes and activities for teen parents and the child care necessary for them to finish school. The program serves between 10 and 16 teen-headed families at any given time.

Staff
The director and the assistant director (who also acts as family support coordinator) manage a staff of 31 child care teachers. Each classroom has a lead teacher, teacher assistant, and aide. A support staff of nine delivers services for CFD's comprehensive program: a bus driver provides transportation to and from child care, the kitchen staff prepares meals, a part-time social worker offers mental health support, and a community health outreach worker based out of CFD supports families throughout the county and arranges services to meet their needs.

Community Family Development is committed to recruiting local residents as teachers; employing teachers from the community tends to make families more comfortable and meaningful connections more likely. CFD teachers are ethnically, culturally, and economically representative of Poughkeepsie. Classroom aides do not have formal qualifications aside from a high school degree, but are offered inservice training while working. Because they share a common background and are able to understand families' values, methods of communication and child rearing, and the difficulties they face, these teachers are highly valued. Lead teachers have at least a two-year degree in early childhood education. All teachers are encouraged to continue their education, and the program has a clear career ladder. The director believes CFD's good staff retention rate is related to the program's career opportunities; moreover, to attract and maintain a qualified staff, CFD also pays a competitive, higher-than-minimum-wage salary.

Professional Development
All teachers receive at least 15 hours of internal training annually. The director explains that when the program decided it needed to bring in people from the community as staff in order to build beneficial relationships with families, the program anticipated the need to train them. A CFD priority became to design and deliver as much in-house training as possible; otherwise, lack of transportation and the cost of training would be too great an obstacle for these local teachers. CFD's inservice training focuses on improving teachers' skills through sessions on child development, curriculum, and parent-teacher conferences. In addition, the program will pay 50 percent of teachers' tuition at post-secondary institutions; some take advantage of this to earn their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. To help teachers gain the CDA, the local Head Start has recently opened its CDA training to the community.

Training for Family Support
Training for family support is done on-site by Community Family Development's part-time social worker. CFD includes parents in some of these workshops, recognizing that they, too, can benefit from the training content. The workshops have discussed communication with parents and multi-cultural issues. CFD recently hosted a conference on family issues, inviting local public school teachers.

Challenges and Next Steps
Community Family Development is finding that a growing number of families are under increasing stress. From drug use to the poor quality of public schools, the need for augmenting family support resources continues. The teen parent program is especially challenging, as many of the young women leave their homes when they become pregnant and thus lose the support and structure that the family provides, leaving more roles for CFD to try to fill. Moreover, this program is in jeopardy due to financial difficulties. CFD must follow strict regulations associated with teen parent funding. For example, if the mother is suspended from school, she will not receive her child care subsidy for the days she is out of school. CFD teachers then must consider what is best for the family and in many cases decides to accept the child in the center without payment.

CFD would like to incorporate more home visiting into the program in the future to provide more in-depth, individual family support. More young fathers are involved in raising their children, and CFD would like to start a support group for them. There is also some discussion about CFD becoming a community child care training site to provide hands-on training for home-based caregivers. Finding adequate space and funding for additional programs like this is a challenge.

Community Lab School for Family-Centered Child Care
Fort Worth, Texas

Serving primarily professional working families, the Community Lab School for Family-Centered Child Care serves as a training model for family-centered care. To meet community needs, support families, and model effective practices, the Community Lab School offers a parenting education program, a professional development training program for teachers, training and observation rooms, and a resource and referral department. Among other innovative approaches to child care, children are placed in multi-age groups and have the same teacher and classmates for several years, building a feeling of family in the child care setting.

Program Contact	Mary Cutliff, Lab School Director
Location	2700 Meacham Boulevard Fort Worth, TX 76137 Phone: (817) 831-5050 Fax: (817) 831-5070
Number of Sites	One
Year Program Began	1993
Number Served	Up to 125 children/about 100 families
Population Served	Predominantly Caucasian, some African-American, Asian, Latino; single and dual-parent, low- and middle-income families
Age Range of Children	Six weeks to kindergarten-age
Staff-to-Child Ratio	Infants 1:4; toddlers 1:5; preschool 1:10
1995 Budget	$552,784
Primary Funding Sources	Parent fees, foundation grants, and federal funds

Points of Distinction

- **Builds community capacity:** The Community Lab School serves as a model of family-centered child care. Early childhood professionals in the community, outside center administrators, and local center- and home-based caregivers take advantage of training sessions and opportunities to observe at the center.

- **Minimizes stress for working parents:** The program strives to meet parents' needs and implement their suggestions. The center's dry cleaning drop-off service, take-home meals, and on-site sale of postage stamps and snacks, as well as on-site speech, vision, and play therapy, are ways the program meets its goal of making parents' lives less stressful.

- **Promotes staff development:** Through activities such as journaling, in which staff members keep a record for themselves of what they have experienced and learned, the Community Lab School focuses on reflective practices for teachers as they work to understand families and implement the center's family support philosophy.

Community Lab School for Family-Centered Child Care
Fort Worth, Texas

Program Background

In 1990, the First Texas Council of Camp Fire, Inc. recognized the need for an in-depth training program to promote high-quality child care. In order to involve the community and ensure that the program would meet its actual child care needs, the Camp Fire organization elicited input from community leaders and concerned parents. This group evolved into the Family Support Network, a collaboration of 37 members from nonprofit and for-profit child care centers, an independent school district, a junior college, universities, and government agencies. Camp Fire, together with the Family Support Network, led the effort to design the Community Lab School for Family-Centered Child Care (hereafter referred to as the Lab School). Fort Worth's First Texas Council of Camp Fire oversees the Lab School; parent tuition fees are the program's primary funding source.

Today, the Lab School is a state-of-the-art family-centered child care center. It has a parenting education program, a parent resource and lending library, a professional development training program for teachers, training and observation rooms, and a resource and referral department. The Lab School models programs designed to enhance traditional child care services. The higher teacher-to-child ratio provides more individualized attention. Some children have the same teachers and classmates for several years which promotes stable, long-term relationships with both staff and parents.

Community and Participant Characteristics

The Forth Worth, Texas population is extremely varied both culturally and economically. The majority of families are white middle class, with a representation of Asian, Latino, and African-American populations. This same mix is represented in the Lab School. Many are dual-parent, dual-income families and employed by some of the major corporations headquartered in the area.

Collaborations

The Lab School collaborates with several outside organizations to provide programs aimed to simplify parents' lives. It arranged for a dry-cleaning vendor to operate an on-site drop-off and pick-up service, and schedules swimming lessons for children at a local YMCA. The Lab School also collaborates to deliver on-site speech, vision, and play therapy. As a model family support program, the Lab School serves as a training and observation site for hundreds of child care teachers, college and high school students, administrators, educators, parents, and civic groups who visit the Lab School each year. The program is a founding member and has served as the support staff of the Family Support Network, a cross-agency community group that meets monthly to discuss child care issues, strategies to improve the quality of child care in the community, and a community development plan for family support.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

According to the Lab School's brochure, "The Family-Child Care Center is a family-friendly place where parents are genuinely welcome and understood." This statement is based on the Lab

School's philosophy that strong, healthy, and productive parents will engender these same traits in their children. Therefore, the program works to form partnerships with parents to provide family support and an environment that not only enhances the children's growth and development, but also promotes the well-being of the whole family. Teachers understand that parents are the most important people in a child's life and honor the beliefs and lifestyles that parents want for their children.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

Maintaining positive relationships between teachers and parents is one of the Lab School's primary goals. The program incorporated four design features into the Lab School to facilitate effective partnerships between parents and teachers: a parent resource and lending library allows parents and teachers to share information with one another; a comfortable parent lounge provides space for parent-teacher conferences (teachers may also leave notes to parents in families' individual mail boxes located in this room); the family services coordinator's office is by the center's front door, making her highly visible to parents and letting her easily see and interact with families on a daily basis; and classroom observation areas allow parents and teachers to monitor children's behaviors, see developmentally appropriate curricula in action, and observe relationships between children and teachers.

Because positive relationships with parents help teachers support families, teachers sometimes attend parent education sessions with the parents of their students, which may lead to parent-teacher discussions on how to work together. A special seminar called "Parents and Providers as Partners" offers to teach parents and their caregivers opportunities to learn how to cooperatively create a consistent, nurturing, and stimulating environment for the child for whose upbringing they share responsibility; it also aims to enhance parenting skills and lessen the stress and guilt parents often feel when dependent upon child care.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

The Lab School offers parenting courses during the year covering topics such as child development, coping with stress, and balancing work and family. The Lab School also makes parenting and child development information available via its parent resource and lending library.

Every six weeks the program distributes *Hand in Hand*, a newsletter containing child development articles, parental skill-building information, and news about center activities. The program arranges brown bag lunch parenting seminars during the lunch hour on a range of timely topics. Related articles in *Hand in Hand* follow, as well as a parent-child event based on the topic of the lunch.

Fostering Parent-to-Parent Relationships

To offer parents the opportunity to learn from and support each other, the Lab School offers dinner groups to address parenting issues. Parents also participate in the program's parenting courses and seminars, giving them the opportunity to develop mutually beneficial relationships with each other. Social gatherings and class picnics provide opportunities to become better acquainted. A Parents' Night Out one night per month, frees parents to go out while leaving their children at the Lab School.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement
The Lab School works with parents to discover a level of participation that works best for them, one that balances their desire to be involved with their child's care with the other demands on their time. During scheduled conferences, parents and teachers together work out mutual goals and activities in the best interest of the child. Teachers often invite parents into their classrooms to take part in family activities.

Parents' needs and opinions influence all of the Lab School's programs and policies. The center has two decision-making committees, the Family Services Committee and the Fundraising Committee, which involve 10 to 12 parents as representatives of their children's age group. The Family Services Committee meets monthly to plan special events and discuss what the center should do for families. The Fundraising Committee searches for non-budgeted revenue sources to support center activities. These committees may form sub-committees to carry out specific tasks such as organizing an event or forming a community advocacy group. The Lab School encourages parents to volunteer on committees and thus increase their sense of responsibility for the center.

Meeting Family Needs
The Lab School aims to show that the successful delivery of services to families optimizes the mental health of parents and, as a result, of children. A family services coordinator works closely with the families and refers them to various types of community resources, counseling, and other services in the community. Surveys are conducted to obtain suggestions from parents about services that would make their lives a little easier. A family forum is held periodically to allow parents to discuss their needs and make suggestions for future services and activities at the Lab School.

The Lab School also demonstrates that child care centers can provide screening services for children experiencing developmental delays. Students from local universities conduct on-site developmental screenings and answer parents' questions. An area university recently provided speech and language screening at no cost to parents. The program notifies parents of any free clinical testing available in the community.

The program also offers parents services meant to reduce stress in their daily lives and attempts to accommodate the busy schedules of working families. On-site services include: aerobics classes for parents and exercise classes for parents and their children; a one-day dry cleaning service; sale of snack foods for the drive home; take-home meals prepared by the center staff, which parents can purchase in the evening to warm up when they get home; and a mail drop box along with the sale of postage stamps. Parent-teacher conferences times and parent education classes are scheduled according to parents' availability.

Staff
The Lab School's staff of 30 reflects the diversity of the community. The director and assistant director/family support coordinator manage classroom teachers and the support staff. Each classroom has a lead teacher, associate teachers, and part-time assistants (often college students). Lead teachers have two- or four-year degrees in early child development or comparable experience. Other teachers either have or are working on their Child Development Associate

(CDA) credential. Clerical, maintenance, and kitchen staff members provide further services. The program considers commitment to family-centered practice a prerequisite in hiring its staff. The Lab School's staff retention rate is quite high.

Professional Development

The Lab School offers in-house workshops on child care basics such as health and safety, child development, and classroom management. In addition to providing two inservice days per year, the Lab School also conducts monthly staff meetings. Teachers participate in area professional development conferences as part of their ongoing training. Besides training its own personnel, the Lab School is a training ground for home child care and for teachers and administrators. Outside providers may participate in Lab School training courses and study how the Lab School applies child development and curriculum theory via classrooms equipped with observation areas.

Training for Family Support

Most of the Lab School staff members did not receive formal family support training in the early childhood education programs they attended prior to employment. Therefore, the center developed its own family support training. This training is based on input from a full-day inservice workshop for teachers to discuss the meaning of family support and a meeting with parents to learn their perceptions of family support. Two subjects for training are how to communicate openly with parents and how to increase parent involvement. The Lab School is developing a training program to help other centers learn from their successes with family-centered practice. This training program covers five areas: delivering effective auxiliary services for family-centered child care centers, methods for interfacing with community-based services, developing partnerships with staff and parents, changing the paradigm of parents and staff attitudes toward family support, and defining family-centered principles and practices.

Challenges and Next Steps

One of the Lab School's greatest challenges is to develop ways for other child care centers and family child care homes to use or adapt its family support system. To that end, the program plans to document its methodology and successes and use this information in educational seminars given at the model Lab School through designing and implementing research. Four area universities are studying the Lab School's family support approach in an extensive longitudinal research project analyzing the effects of family-centered child care on families and teachers in accredited child care centers and family child care homes.

The Lab School's family support philosophy keeps evolving, and the program continuously evaluates and refines services and operations. (The director has fine-tuned the center's budget and structure to make the program financially feasible and replicable at other sites.) Once the program's model is fully developed, the Lab School plans to replicate its family-focused programs in other child care centers throughout the community. To support these centers, the program will provide a mentoring system.

Gardner Children's Center
San Jose, California

Gardner Children's Center, Inc. is a nonprofit organization providing subsidized child care and developmental services to ethnically diverse, low-income families whose parents are working, training, or on certified job search. It offers children a developmental curriculum, annual on-site health screenings, and enrichment activities such as field trips and swimming lessons. As a family-oriented center, Gardner's Parent Services Project responds to the self-defined needs of its working-parent population.

Program Contact	Frederick J. Ferrer, Executive Director
Location (Administration)	611 Willis Avenue San Jose, CA 95125 Phone: (408) 998-1343 Fax: (408) 998-0534
Number of Sites	Two; plus licensed family caregivers
Year Program Began	1973
Number Served	208 children total
Population Served	Predominantly low-income, single parent families; 74% Hispanic, 19% Caucasian, 7% other minorities
Age Range of Children	Two years and nine months through sixth grade
Staff-to-Child Ratio	Preschool 1:8; family child care 1:6
1995 Budget	Approximately $900,000
Primary Funding Sources	Federal, state, and local funding; parent fees; United Way

Points of Distinction:

- **Utilizes the Parent Services Project model:** Gardner's Parent Services Project (PSP) is based on parents' self-defined interests. Each fall, parents and staff members meet on "Parent Wish Night" to generate a menu of services and activities developed collaboratively by parents and the agency staff. Parents have requested such services as health care resources, parent respite care, mental health workshops, cooking nights, bingo games, community service referrals, training in parenting skills, and social gatherings. PSP coordinators support parents in organizing these activities; parent participation in all activities is by choice.

- **Promotes child health:** Gardner arranges for on-site health screenings and immunizations for all uninsured children through a well-established local clinic. If follow-up visits are recommended, Gardner staff assists families with referrals and "walks them through" the next steps toward ensuring their child's good health. Through Gardner's efforts, 100% of all children at the center are current in their immunizations. Gardner attributes this rate to using a local clinic that is well established and trusted among members of the community.

- **Encourages community involvement:** Representatives from the corporate sector, as well as representatives from local schools and the police department, serve on the Board of Directors. Gardner also relies on volunteer support from many teens in the neighborhood, who look to Gardner as a place both to work and grow.

Gardner Children's Center
San Jose, California

Program Background

Since 1973, Gardner Children's Center, Inc. (hereafter referred as Gardner) has been operating to provide subsidized child care and developmental services to low-income children in Santa Clara County, CA. Originally a program of model cities, Gardner was funded through the Department of Social Welfare. Then, in 1973, Gardner became totally funded by the State Department of Education. In 1985 Gardner received a grant from the United Way to expand its programs, and in 1987 it became a full member of the United Way Agency. Recently, Gardner received a grant to become a Parent Services Project (PSP) site. The PSP is a nationwide effort to use child care centers to provide support services to low-income families. Central to the philosophy of the PSP model are the concepts of parent involvement and empowerment.

Gardner oversees three programs: 1) a center-based full-day program for children ages two years and nine months through pre-kindergarten, serving 48 children; this includes before- and after-school care and full-time care during summers and holidays; 2) a before- and after-school child care program, located on two elementary school sites, for families in all income ranges up to grade six, serving 140 children; and 3) a network of four licensed caregivers who offer child care to infants, toddlers, and school-age children in their homes, serving 20 children. Gardner contracts with these caregivers, monitors them, and provides them with resources and materials.

A sliding scale fee is applied to all programs; parents pay tuition based on a scale developed by the state Department of Education. Since program eligibility is based on family income and need, with priority given to children receiving protective services, followed by low-income families who are in training or employed, most families do not pay full tuition at Gardner; only 22% of the yearly budget is from parent fees.

Community and Participant Characteristics

The 1.6 million residents of Santa Clara County represent a diversity of ethnic, cultural, and economic backgrounds. The median income of Santa Clara County, located in the heart of Silicon Valley, is high, as are the cost of living and the cost of child care. For the 300,000 families who earn less than the median income, this presents a challenge to finding affordable, quality child care. Gardner's mission is to serve the lowest income strata of the community and those who are employed, but are still struggling to provide for their families. Approximately three-fourths of Gardner's families are Latino, another one-fifth are Caucasian, and the rest are Asian or African-American.

Collaborations

Gardner has a number of well-established community partnerships. It is one of nine agencies in the San Jose Child Care Consortium, a group that banded together to obtain funding for on-site mental health services. The Consortium contracts with a counseling agency to supervise a Ph.D. intern as a consultant to the staff. If parents, via staff members, request mental health services, the intern can either provide supervised counseling directly to the parent, or refer staff members to the appropriate agencies for help.

Gardner is a member of the Santa Clara County Training Consortium, an organization that obtains state funds to be used for staff development, inservice training, and application fees for families interested in establishing family child care homes.

Gardner's latest collaboration is with four other agencies that have banded together to form the Learning Community. Their purpose is to conduct an outcome evaluation that will look at the impact of child care on family income.

Gardner's relationship with the East Valley Community Clinic ensures that every child in its program is current on his/her immunizations, and has annual health, dental, vision, and hearing screenings.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy
The Gardner Children's Center parent brochure states that "the overall program incorporates values of parent participation, economic self-sufficiency, education, and cultural sensitivity, in a cost-efficient manner by maximizing available resources, thereby enhancing the quality of family life." At Gardner, families are recognized for their strengths, rather than deficits. Parents are viewed as an integral part of the learning community and are respected for being the most important people in their children's lives.

Building Parent-Program Relationships
Family support at Gardner is based on respect and inclusiveness. The director's desk is centrally located by the front door, making him accessible to parents as they enter and leave the building. Staff members and parents interact on a first-name basis, and the teaching staff makes it a point to be intimately aware of each family's home situation. Parent conferences are scheduled twice a year; however, informal parent meetings between parents and teachers occur on a regular basis. Parents report that they always feel comfortable discussing issues with teachers and that their needs are always addressed, either by the staff or by referral to other agencies.

Strengthening Parent Knowledge and Skills
The Parent Services coordinators support parents in organizing the activities they choose. As described above, the annual Parent Wish Night generates a "menu of services" that are facilitated by the staff throughout the year. The activities that emerge from Wish Night reflect the specific needs and ethnic and cultural contexts of the families involved. A resource room at the Center contains materials on children's health, development, and other relevant topics for parents.

Fostering Parent-To-Parent Relationships
Some of the events organized by Gardner parents are designed to promote a sense of community among Gardner families. In the past parents have organized adult-only activities such as dances, mothers' clubs, and fathers' breakfasts. Through these activities, parents discover their common concern about their children. They also discover the power of working in a group to improve their families' lives.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement
The PSP model respects a parent's ability to know what he/she needs, and thus, participants make their own choices about their level of involvement throughout the year. The metaphor of a "menu of services" implies that parents choose from the "menu" those programs that interest them. Some parents are drawn to the social gatherings, some to the celebrations, and some to the educational workshops. Thus, while all parents do not attend all events, most parents attend the events that are the most relevant to their family situation. Ideally, parent involvement in designing the programs helps ensure that PSP programs are culturally relevant and well-attended because the parents have a stake in them.

Meeting Family Needs
The Gardner teachers are closely connected with each family affiliated with the Center. They are available to provide support and referrals to all families requiring assistance beyond what the Center can provide. Parents are encouraged to work with the Parent Services coordinators on an individual basis to respond to urgent needs such as housing and medical care. Additionally, the Gardner Scholarship Fund is used to meet temporary or partial needs of parents in financial stress.

Staff

The Gardner Children's Center has a stable and experienced staff. The Center employs 25 staff members, including an Executive Director, a program coordinator, certified teachers, and aides. The average Gardner teacher has worked with the agency for seven years; some teachers have been there as long as 16-18 years. All teachers and the Parent Services coordinators have bachelor's degrees; some teachers also have a master's degree. Ten of the 18 staff members are Latino. Staff members are evaluated by the Executive Director and the staff member's direct supervisor annually. At that time, the staff member must articulate three goals for the next year, including one goal pertaining to training.

Professional Development

According to the Gardner Staff Development Plan, "all staff have personal development plans based on their job description and the training goal or goals identified during their annual performance evaluation." Salary increases, based in part on the completion of additional college-level coursework, are used to encourage teachers to pursue their education. Teachers can take day classes on early childhood education at a local community college; tuition for the courses is partly reimbursed through a state-funded program. The Center sends teachers to attend major professional conferences related to their stated goals. The teachers attends seminars and workshops throughout the year on a range of topics from child development to computers in the classroom to nonprofit management. The program closes for staff development on two inservice training days; the staff develops an agenda for these two days. In the past, the staff has chosen to address such topics as working with challenging children, self-esteem issues in early childhood, and meeting individual families' needs. Finally, there is an annual staff retreat that provides the opportunity for developing good working relationships with other staff members as well as for exploring specific issues in depth.

Gardner also offers training to other members of the community. Santa Clara University (SCU) places students at Gardner as part of its effort to offer "experiential education" across disciplines. SCU also provides tutorial services for school-aged children, with approximately 100 students participating each year. Gardner benefits from the one-on-one assistance with families and the additional help in the classrooms; the students earn course credit while obtaining valuable life experiences outside their university setting.

Training for Family Support

In additional to the activities described above, Gardner conducts ongoing training sessions that deal specifically with family issues relevant to the whole staff. The director uses conference videotapes and articles from professional publications as a springboard for discussions on how to address the family support needs of Gardner families.

Challenges and Next Steps

In response to overwhelming community need, Gardner is launching a multimillion-dollar capital campaign to construct a new building of 26,000 square feet, which will accommodate 60 additional children for the Children's Center and house more administration for expanded off-site child care programs. The new space will allow for corporate partnerships to provide on-site job readiness and career development. Finally, with the new facility, Gardner will be able to extend health services to all family members, including check-ups, general health screenings, and basic health information classes.

KCMC Child Development Corporation
Kansas City, Missouri

KCMC Child Development Corporation is the Head Start grantee for three counties in the Kansas City area and thus offers child care to a population encompassing rural towns and inner-city neighborhoods. Its eleven Head Start sites and three Full Start centers serve children from low- and middle-income families; 60 percent of families are headed by single parents. KCMC provides comprehensive child care and family support services, including health care services and parent education programs to over 2000 children and their families. It offers its own and other area teachers and caregivers training, technical assistance, and a resource room.

Program Contact	Dwayne Crompton, Executive Director
Location (Administration)	2104 East 18th Street Kansas City, MO 64127 Phone: (816) 474-3751 Fax: (816) 474-1818
Number of Sites	11 Head Start centers and three Full Start centers
Year Program Began	Head Start in 1970; Full Start in 1993
Number Served	2,000 children (877 directly through Head Start)
Population Served	African-American, Asian-American, Caucasian, Latino; low- to moderate-income families
Age Range of Children	Head Start — three- and four-year-olds; Full Start — two- to eight-year-olds
Staff-to-Child Ratio	1:10 for both Head Start and Full Start
1995 Budget	$8 million
Primary Funding Sources	Head Start federal funding; federal, state, county, and private foundation sources for Full Start

Points of Distinction

- **Adheres to a holistic family support philosophy:** KCMC embraces a family support philosophy which focuses on identifying and meeting the needs of parents and children.

- **Collaboration with Head Start:** In addition to its eleven traditional Head Start sites, KCMC has three Full Start centers. Full Start incorporates Head Start services into existing child care centers, offering full-day, year-round child care and education programs to all enrolled children, some of whom are eligible for Head Start and some of whom are not.

- **Offers comprehensive on-site services:** KCMC provides families with an array of on-site services, including child care, educational programs for children and parents, mental health counseling, and dental and health care. Several staff members specialize in working with disabilities in order to accommodate special needs children, who make up 10 percent of the enrollment.

KCMC Child Development Corporation
Kansas City, Missouri

Program Background

KCMC Child Development Corporation was established in 1970 as a model cities program to provide quality child care for children in inner Kansas City neighborhoods. Today, as the Head Start grantee for three counties, KCMC Child Development Corporation (hereafter referred to as KCMC) serves children in urban, suburban, and rural communities. The program operates eleven traditional Head Start centers and three Full Start centers (for two- to eight-year-olds); all sites provide child care and educational opportunities for children and parents. The program also has a home-based Head Start program available to families eligible for Head Start but without a Head Start center nearby: a family educator goes into the home and provides Head Start services, working one-on-one with the child and parent.

Directly and indirectly, KCMC serves approximately 2,000 children. KCMC supports its center-based teachers and caregivers (as well as about 250 home-based caregivers not under Head Start regulations) through training, technical assistance, and an on-site resource room full of materials related to child care. The program also coordinates reimbursements to caregivers from the federal Child/Adult Care Food program for serving nutritious meals and snacks.

KCMC is responsive to the child care needs of communities. In the late 1980s, the program began extending the hours of selected Head Start centers, which normally offer half-day care during the school year, in order to deliver full-day care on a year-round basis. In 1993, KCMC launched a pilot program known as Full Start in existing child care centers. The program offers comprehensive services to low- and moderate-income families regardless of whether they meet the stringent Head Start income and age guidelines.

Community and Participant Characteristics

The Kansas City metropolitan area is unique in that inner-city neighborhoods, suburban communities, and small rural towns are within a few minutes' drive of one another. The population is diverse, with many African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Latinos in urban locations, and predominantly Caucasians in the suburbs and more rural communities. KCMC's participants reflect the variation found in its service area. By law, KCMC's Head Start centers focus exclusively on low-income families; Full Start centers serve both low- and middle-income families. In addition, 10 percent of KCMC's enrollment is set aside for children with special needs. About 60 percent of the participating families are headed by single parents.

Collaborations

For Full Start to be financially viable, KCMC had to convince Head Start officials to let the program mix federal funds with other public and private dollars. As a result of this arrangement, all families receive the same services, but Head Start dollars cover services only for families eligible for Head Start, and other public and private funds pay for services for families ineligible for Head Start. With Full Start, resources in existence in the community (United Way, Department of Social Services, city and state government, etc.) have been brought together to meet family needs. While Full Start centers are managed by their sponsoring agency, KCMC provides staff training and technical assistance.

KCMC worked with Penn Valley Community College and community funders to establish the Francis Child Development Institute, which designs and delivers training to the early childhood community. KCMC was primarily involved in developing training designed specifically for caregivers with little or no early childhood expertise, particularly home-based caregivers in the urban core.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

The KCMC philosophy, Karing for Children is our Main Concern, is the cornerstone that guides KCMC's work. Recognizing that parents and other family members are the primary educators of children and strongly influence them, KCMC concentrates on family strengths. It tries to bring out qualities and capabilities that bolster parents' spirit of resourcefulness and resolution to meet challenges. It is also moving to make all sites "family-friendly," by designing different spaces for parents to concentrate on job development, learn about community resources, and relax and network with other parents.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

Teachers and other staff members have an open, supportive attitude toward all parents, even those who have only small amounts of time to participate. They recognize that with welfare reform, parents may not have as much time to spend at the centers as they once might have. Parents can visit at any time their schedules permit. The program emphasizes communicating and interacting with parents, learning from them, and taking their perspective. Staff members recognizes that challenges do arise in parent-program relationships but strive toward resolution, a process that can foster growth.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

In KCMC's home-based programs, teachers go into homes for one-and-a-half hours a week to work directly with parents, offering education and support. In the center-based programs, individual portfolios are done for the children, which help parents understand the development of their child. When the portfolios are discussed with parents, teachers are able to learn, too, about parent perceptions regarding their child's development. KCMC encourages continued parent involvement at home by giving parents "home bags" every month which contain educational and nutritional information to help parents nurture their children.

Fostering Parent-to-Parent Relationships

KCMC offers monthly parent activities at many different times during the day and night in order to fit parents' schedules. It frequently reimburses parents for transportation and child care costs incurred in order to attend or provides free child care on site. These activities give parents opportunities to work together and build supportive friendships.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

KCMC has a "total family" approach which aims to include parents, as well as other family members and outside caregivers, in activities pertaining to their child's care, development, and education both within and outside of the classroom. The program's parent involvement coordinator and staff give parents and other key people in a child's life a wide range of volunteer options in the hopes that they will find an activity that interests them and that they are comfortable doing. For example, some parents assist in the design of classroom curricula and activities, some volunteer regularly in the classroom, and others may put together menus for the food service program or help maintain a center's grounds. Parents are involved in program planning at the center level and also have opportunities to join a higher-level policy council at the agency level.

Meeting Family Needs

KCMC family advocates work closely and cooperatively with parents to assess family strengths and challenges, evaluate family needs, and, with the family, jointly develop an agreed-upon plan to support all members of the household. Family advocates help families resolve personal, financial, and medical issues and gain access to needed services in the community such as parenting skills workshops, job training and placement, and health care. The program's overall goal is to improve families' physical and emotional well-being and economic self-sufficiency.

KCMC's expanded Head Start hours enable the program to meet the child care needs of families struggling to get off or stay off of welfare, parents holding down two jobs, and those involved in job training and education programs.

Ten percent of KCMC's enrollment is open to families of children with special needs, who often have difficulty finding quality child care. The program's disabilities staff, consisting of the parent involvement coordinator, a disabilities specialist, a mental health coordinator, and paraprofessionals, provides assessments, free screenings, and referrals. KCMC also enables special needs children to participate in center activities by providing a physical environment that has been adapted to meet their needs via ramps and other special equipment.

Staff

KCMC's central office houses technical and support personnel who provide services to specific assigned centers. The executive director manages the full spectrum of KCMC's child care centers and programs. A director of education develops educational programs and coordinates education specialists. Education specialists are assigned to individual Head Start centers, work closely with the center staff on curriculum development, and provide technical support to teachers. A coordinator of social services supports the family advocates who deliver supportive services to families enrolled in the program. Service coordinators and assistants educate parents about ways to participate in the program; they also train Full Start and Head Start staff members, as well as other child care teachers in the community.

KCMC hires, trains and supervises the entire staff of its 11 Head Start centers. Each Head Start classroom has a lead teacher and teacher assistant; additionally, classrooms share a teacher assistant. Lead teachers have a bachelor's or associate's degree in early childhood education. Many teacher assistants have earned the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or are in the process of doing so. The staff retention rate varies from 5 to 15 years.

Professional Development

KCMC provides ongoing professional development opportunities. Once a year it offers training to acquaint staff members with KCMC policies, procedures and practices. The program collaborates with the Head Start staff of two school districts in Missouri (Kansas City and Independence) to organize Head Start grantee/agency-wide workshops and convey KCMC's vision, philosophy and strategy. Inservice training is continuous throughout the program year; the program frequently brings in consultants to share their expertise in specific topics.

To help the staff better understand and utilize the broad set of support services available within KCMC programming — which increasingly rely on community partnerships and collaborations — KCMC has introduced training focused on inter- and intra-agency teamwork and collaboration building. The program plans to expand its training offerings related to these issues. KCMC is in the process of refining its training portfolio and has run focus groups representing all staff levels, from directors to middle-management to teachers, in order to gather suggestions on how to make future training more effective.

In addition to in-house training, KCMC also encourages staff members to pursue formal training, whether general course topics or CDA training, and offers tuition reimbursement. Staff members are also encouraged to take advantage of local, state, and national conferences. Each year KCMC pays for selected staff members to attend the national Head Start conference.

Training for Family Support

The family advocates charged to work directly with the families convene weekly with the various staff members providing services to families to discuss issues of concern, make presentations on an array of topics, and evaluate staff skills and performance. Discussion topics range from how to recognize and enhance different adult learning styles to how to increase parent involvement in program activities. KCMC offers other staff development sessions at least once a month on subjects such as cultural diversity and leadership styles and draws from national resources such as Head Start's manual, *Engaging Parents,* in its training sessions.

Challenges and Next Steps

Integrating family support with child care presents many challenges. One is that the process of identifying family needs and then developing a service plan to meet those needs requires families to be open and upfront and staff members to be creative and flexible. Describing this process as a "progressive state of involvement," KCMC coordinators advise staff members to maintain their focus and awareness of their own and others' roles and responsibilities: successful interventions and outcomes depend upon working well together.

Another challenge is coordinating teams and maintaining communication despite the size of the organization and the geographical distance between sites. KCMC views good leadership skills as the route to smooth teamwork and clear communication program-wide. Furthermore, the central office staff strives to provide strong supports for the program's many child care sites, minimizing centers' sense of isolation and helping teachers resolve issues efficiently with qualified partners.

Los Niños Child Development and Family Program
Napa, California

Los Niños Child Development and Family Program demonstrates its commitment to family support through the use of the Parent Services Project (PSP), a program based on the philosophy that healthy parents rear healthy children. Los Niños serves many "at-risk" families and families having children with special needs. Los Niños strives for an atmosphere of trust and understanding where its population of predominantly low-income Latino parents work in partnership with child care teachers.

Program Contact	Betty Koufos, Program Director
Location (Administration/ Child Care Center)	1510 Myrtle Avenue Napa, CA 94558 Phone: (707) 257-2844 Fax: (707) 257-1766
Number of Sites	Two (child care and infant centers at different sites)
Year Program Began	Child care center in 1975; infant center in 1992
Number Served	Child care center: 60; infant center: 12
Population Served	Predominately Latino, also African-American, Caucasian, and Native American; low- to middle-income and teen parents
Age Range of Children	Child care center: two to five years; infant center: birth to two years
Staff-to-Child Ratio	Child care center 1:8; infant center 1:4
1995 Budget	Child care center: $342,000; infant center: $44,000
Primary Funding Sources	California Department of Education

Points of Distinction

- **Offers extensive programming for parents:** Using the Parent Services Project (PSP) model, Los Niños Child Development and Family Program aims to build on family strengths and offers parents a variety of social supports, opportunities for program involvement, parent education classes, and job skills training to encourage the development of healthy families.

- **Involves parents in governing boards:** Two Parent Advisory Boards (one for the child care center and one for the infant center) set all policy for the program's family support and parenting components and participate in the centers' fiscal decisions. The boards also act as liaisons between program administrators and parents, facilitating a two-way flow of information.

- **Focuses on communication:** Staff members focus on positive communication with families. Spanish is the primary language at the child care center, and, showing the program's commitment to effective communication, one-half of the staff members are bilingual.

Los Niños Child Development and Family Program
Napa, California

Program Background

Los Niños Child Development and Family Program (hereafter referred to as Los Niños), established in 1975, is part of the Napa County Council of Economic Opportunity (NCCEO), a community action agency that includes area Head Start programs, food banks, and homeless shelters. The program's child care center serves children of working parents or parents enrolled in job training or other education programs. Its infant center, which began as an independent operation in 1992, cares for children of teen parents who remain in school. The NCCEO oversees both centers; the program director and the program's Parent Advisory Boards contribute to policy decisions and manage center operations. Primary funding comes from California's Department of Education.

Parent Services Project (PSP)

Recognizing the benefits of greater parent involvement, the Los Niños staff decided in 1986 to implement the Parent Services Project (PSP). PSP integrates family support services into child care centers, schools, and other programs that serve families. The PSP philosophy, which is now integral to the program at Los Niños, maintains that healthy parents rear healthy children and that parents are partners with teachers in the care of their children. PSP helps teachers to decrease parents' feelings of isolation and to find the resources necessary to meet family needs; it encourages family involvement, strong interpersonal relationships, and good communication skills in a family-centered environment. PSP aims to promote a sense of competency in parents through parent education classes, and decision-making and leadership workshops. It also offers respite child care and activities that foster peer group support. Although PSP is a national program, the centers administer it independently. The child care and infant centers each have their own PSP coordinator who oversees parent and family activities. Parents control all PSP funds, which the centers must raise themselves.

Community and Participant Characteristics

Napa is a suburban community in one of California's premier wine-producing regions. Although tourism generates a good deal of revenue, other industries in the area are economically depressed. Los Niños serves low- to middle-income families and a predominately Latino population (the primary language for many families is Spanish). One-third of the families are Caucasian, and about 10 percent are from African-American or Native American backgrounds. Los Niños is open to all children, including children of parents with a medical incapacity or children in "at-risk" family situations. It accepts special needs children, most of whom have physical disabilities, in its full-inclusion program. Los Niños also serves teen parents who receive state subsidies for child care and are required to remain enrolled in school.

Collaborations

Los Niños collaborates with a local child care resource and referral agency to offer parent education workshops, which are open to families participating in the program and the general community as well. The resource and referral agency takes care of advertising and finding a workshop leader, and the program provides classrooms for the workshops and child care for participants. Los Niños also collaborates with Napa Valley Community College: Students volunteer and observe at the centers, and faculty members conduct training for center staff members and parents.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

As stated in its parent handbook, Los Niños believes "each parent can maximize the benefits of the program for their child and themselves by becoming involved in center activities, talking with staff members, making suggestions, and attending parent meetings and social events." Los Niños's family support philosophy is based on "doing things *with* families rather than *for* families." Recognizing that the attitude of teachers and caregivers is a critical part of building partnerships with families, the program hires those who are committed to the whole family, can interact in a wholesome manner, and are sympathetic to parents' needs.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

Based on parent suggestions, teachers at Los Niños developed a daily information form and check list given to families once a week to tell them how their children are doing at the center. In addition to this formalized means of communication, teachers assert that one of the best ways to support parents is simply to listen to them. The program builds an environment of trust in which teachers care for children and, when possible, help parents work through their personal problems. Parent-teacher relations are greatly enhanced by the fact that so many teachers can speak the parents' native language of Spanish. Parents of a child with special needs are encouraged to invite important extended family members to create with the staff the development plans for the child.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

Los Niños offers parent education classes and support groups in both English and Spanish. The program develops classes and forms groups based on feedback from parents. For example, a group of men may be interested in a particular topic, or a group of grandparents may ask for their own support group. Classes such as the workshop on positive discipline discuss common problems, enable parents to share real-life examples, and work out ways to deal with them. At first, few parents took advantage of these classes; the director realized that many families did not attend because they were afraid to talk about what goes on in their homes. Teachers confronted that issue by positioning themselves as there to help, not to pass judgment.

Fostering Parent-to-Parent Relationships

A primary objective of PSP activities is to give parents an opportunity to build support networks. For example, after some teen parents, who are often isolated from their peers, indicated a desire to spend more time with other teen parents, the program started an aerobics class that provided free child care to encourage relationships among them. Based on parent interests, Family Fun Activities such as potlucks, movie nights, picnics, and craft and cooking classes have also given parents opportunities to develop relationships with each other. The Parent Advisory Boards are other important peer resources for parents, with board members communicating with other parents to ensure that everyone has a chance to be heard; discussion among parents often generates new PSP activities. The board is also responsible for operating a Parent Option Fund through which money generated via fundraising or grants is available to parents who apply for a loan, an idea originally suggested by parents. The board evaluates loan applications, decides how much money to advance, and sets the terms of repayment.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

Los Niños is mandated by the state Department of Education to have parent policy committees, which they have had since their inception. Los Niños follows a partnership approach that seeks out parents' opinions and asks them to participate in program governance. The program's Parent Advisory Boards are self-governing groups open to all interested parents which set all PSP policy and control funds coming into the centers from grants and fund-raisers organized by parents. PSP's focus on developing parents' leadership skills has enabled the boards to evolve into governing bodies. PSP's exercises in decision-making skills prepare parents to agree upon group activities, choose subjects for workshops, and make specific recommendations for program and facility improvements. Teachers and other staff members are no longer viewed as intermediaries whose job is to find ways to make parents' suggestions happen; instead, parents assume as much responsibility as possible for implementing ideas.

Meeting Family Needs

Activities at Los Niños reflect the practical needs of the participating families. For example, staff members developed programs for teen parents wanting career training. They help provide local transportation for activities and provide respite child care to let parents run errands or simply have some time to themselves. Because the centers have restrictions against sick children in the centers, the program started a "Get Well" program that pays for in-home care for mildly ill children. This allows parents to avoid missing work or school.

Los Niños also strives to serve families who traditionally find it difficult to place their children in child care. The centers reserve space for children of parents with a medical incapacity or families with "at-risk" situations such as physical abuse in the home or a parent addicted to drugs or alcohol. In 1995 the child care center began a full-inclusion program that provides care for children with physical disabilities and behavioral problems. The active environment of the center proved too stimulating for children with behavioral disorders, however, and now the center tailors its special education program specifically to children with physical disabilities. These children go the center half-days throughout the week and are included in activities with their peers.

Staff

Los Niños has one program director. Each center has an assistant director who oversees lead teachers and teacher assistants and a PSP coordinator who facilitates PSP activities. Other employees include kitchen help, office assistants, and support staff. The program tries to hire teachers with degrees in early childhood education and child care experience, as well as backgrounds similar to the families they serve. All teachers are required by the Department of Education to hold a teaching permit. Because Spanish is the first language of many families, 7 of the program's 14 staff members are bilingual. The program has a high staff retention rate, with most teachers working at the centers 5 years or more. The director attributes this stability to good communication and strong, open relationships among staff members.

Professional Development

Los Niños has access to the many trainers on the NCCEO staff; the NCCEO also refers staff members to trainers outside its organization. Parents are included in some of the teacher training on curricular or health issues, such as CPR training. In addition, each center has weekly staff meetings in which outside trainers come in to conduct workshops, frequently on topics for which teachers identify a need. Past workshops have focused on such issues as developing communication skills, working with people from diverse backgrounds, and implementing full-inclusion strategies. Resource specialists and teachers from the County Special Education program also provide training on developing plans for special needs children.

Training for Family Support

The PSP coordinator at Los Niños organizes joint parent-teacher family support training based on suggestions by parents and teachers. Topics of training include how to improve communication among parents and staff members, encourage parent participation, and manage successful meetings. Training has also focused on understanding diversity and working with different leadership styles.

Challenges and Next Steps

Implementing the PSP philosophy of doing things with people instead of for people has been a challenge for Los Niños. For some teachers, it was difficult to step back, give parents control, and let them make decisions for the centers. Because teachers feel accountable and, sometimes, feel a need to be the authority, it can sometimes be hard to accept parents' positions in terms of the PSP philosophy. However, teachers are learning not to feel threatened by input from families and to follow their lead.

Los Niños's teachers try to avoid being judgmental, a particularly challenging goal given some of the choices that families make. Dilemmas faced by teachers include such incidents as a parent who appeared to be under the influence of drugs showing up to drive a child home. In such situations, a teacher must decide whether to intervene and how. The impact of drugs can be disheartening: Teachers have become close to children and have seen their progress, only to have a family drop out of the program, beyond reach. Dealing with teenage parents presents its own set of challenges, one being that it is difficult to get them actively involved. Teachers must convince these 15- and 16-year-olds (who have their own set of interests) that their input is important and that doing program evaluations is worthwhile.

Because the centers are parent-governed, program success depends on the quantity and quality of family involvement, which is a challenge as parents are busy and sometimes do not understand the importance of their involvement. Los Niños hopes parent participation will grow; program staff members believe this will occur through parents watching and being encouraged by other involved parents and seeing the impact they can have in molding the program.

Pacific Oaks Children's School
Pasadena, California

Pacific Oaks Children's School was founded in 1945 by seven Quaker families. Today, it encompasses seven programs in two Pasadena locations. It is best known for its emphasis on rich learning environments, self-esteem building, choice-making, and a commitment to anti-bias education, the hallmarks of the Pacific Oaks College curriculum. Pacific Oaks's commitment to parent involvement has generated its nickname of "Pacific Oaks Parent-Children's School."

Program Contact	Yolanda Torres, Director
Location (Administration)	714 West California Boulevard Pasadena, CA 91105 Phone: (626) 397-1363 Fax: (626) 577-6145
Number of Sites	Two
Year Program Began	1945
Number Served	200 children
Population Served	Upper-middle and middle-class families within a 15- to 20-mile radius of the campus; well-educated parents; 40% minority population
Age Range of Children	3 months to 9 years
Staff-to-Child Ratio	Infant-toddler 1:4; two-year-old program 1:3; preschool 1:7; kindergarten 1:10; school-age program 1:8; full-day care 3:7
Number of Staff Members	33 teachers
1995 Budget	$1,048,504
Primary Funding Sources	Pacific Oaks College and Children's School tuition combined

Points of Distinction:

- **Makes a commitment to anti-bias education:** The primary goal of Pacific Oaks Children's School is to provide the educational conditions in which all children are able to like who they are and, at the same time, to promote each child's comfort and respect for differences in others.

- **Focuses on conflict resolution in all programs:** Pacific Oaks Children's School introduces conflict resolution in the infant/parent program and it continues to permeate the curriculum through grade three. From the earliest ages, children are encouraged to base their resolutions on words, not actions. By ages three and four, teachers seldom have to settle disputes, if they arise.

- **Involves parents in program:** In keeping with the commitment to emergent curricula throughout the program, topics for parent meetings arise from parenting issues raised within the group. Periodic "Town Hall" meetings are conducted at which parents meet with the Board of Directors and focus on their questions and concerns.

Pacific Oaks Children's School
Pasadena, California

Program Background

Pacific Oaks Children's School was founded in 1945 by seven Quaker families committed to the notion that children are the hope of the future. By 1959 the school had grown, and the Pacific Oaks College was established to meet the growing demand for teachers trained in the school's curriculum.

Today, the Pacific Oaks Children's School operates seven programs, each designed to meet the diverse child care needs of its families. Program schedules vary from a few hours twice a week, to half-day kindergarten, to full-day, year-round child care. Additionally, the school operates a school-age child care program from ages five to nine years. To further accommodate the needs of working parents, this program expands to full-day during school vacations. All programs approach parents with the same attitude of openness and respect.

Most parents at the school pay full tuition; some scholarship money, however, is available. Children who are awarded a scholarship in the Infant/Toddler/Parent program are guaranteed the scholarship through the third grade. Currently, the School, in conjunction with Pacific Oaks College, is launching a one-million-dollar endowment campaign, exclusively for tuition scholarships.

Community and Participant Characteristics

Pasadena is a culturally diverse community, and the school attempts to recruit a population that is representative of the community. However, 63% of the families affiliated with the school are Caucasian, middle- and upper-middle class, two-parent, well-educated families. Approximately 37% of the school's population are minority students; this includes many biracial/bicultural children. The Director feels that if more scholarship funds were available, the school's population would be more economically diverse, but high tuition rates limit the number of low-income families able to attend the school. Cognizant that the high cost of the program limits its economic diversity, the School attempts to diversify its population through its scholarship endowment fund.

Because of the high expectations for parent involvement, all children entering the Infant/Toddler/ Parent program must be living with at least one parent (as opposed to extended family, foster care, etc.). Approximately 40% of all children entering the Infant/Toddler/Parent program continue at the school through third grade. Attrition peaks in the kindergarten year, as many children leave to attend the public schools.

Collaborations

Over the years Pacific Oaks Children's School has established relationships with a variety of organizations that have served to enrich the lives of the families affiliated with the school. The most long-standing relationship continues to be with Pacific Oaks College. Since 1954 the College has provided the school with students who are in training to become preschool and elementary education teachers.

In an effort to diversify the parent population from an economic standpoint, the Pacific Oaks Children's School works closely with Child Care Information Services to assist with state-funded vouchers for child care for children through age four.

Two collaborations have developed in order to meet the needs of the school's special needs population. The school has a relationship with the Pasadena School District so that children age three and above who have an identified special need can obtain off-site services such as speech therapy. Secondly, the school contracts with a private consultation group to examine how the school is responding to its special needs children and their families. The group reviews the school's special needs plans bimonthly and makes recommendations both for ways to improve the services within the school, as well as suggestions for agencies outside the school that might be able to better address an individual family's issues.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

The overriding philosophy of the Pacific Oaks Children's School with regard to family support is openness. It is crucial to the success of the school that parents feel welcome at all times; parents' participation in most parent programs, however, is voluntary. According to the program brochure, parents are asked "to get involved, with the freedom to choose where and how they want to participate." The director suggests that the name of the school should be the Pacific Oaks Parent-Children's School, to make it clear that the school is for the entire family, not just the children in isolation. Above all, the key to adopting a family support philosophy is hiring teachers who like relating to parents.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

There are several institutionalized mechanisms that attempt to build strong parent-school relationships. At the beginning of each school year, head teachers conduct home visits to each child in order to begin the ongoing relationship with the child and his/her family. Parent conferences and full developmental summaries of each child are prepared twice a year. Additionally, parents of the infants and toddlers have weekly group meeting with their children's teachers; parents of children ages four and older have monthly parent meetings.

The director states, however, that the most natural and important way for promoting good relations with parents is the informal, daily contact with staff. Teachers try to project an attitude of availability and accessibility toward parents. The director's office is centrally located so that parents can easily drop by to share their issues and concerns. Coffee is served before-school and after-school each morning so that parents can come early and observe their children, talk to other parents, and touch base with the teachers.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

Parent education occurs formally and informally at Pacific Oaks Children's School. Regularly scheduled parent meetings occur for each age group; their purpose is to discuss issues of relevance to the group, such as discipline, nutrition, or sleeping habits. School-wide parent education meetings are held monthly; topics for these meetings are generated by program staff. Informally, teachers work daily with parents to increase their understanding of developmental issues specific to their child.

Fostering Parent-to-Parent Relationships

Pacific Oaks Children's School firmly believes that parents need to form a community of peers. To encourage parent-to-parent connections, coffee is provided every day both before school and after school. Parents are encouraged to take time to talk with other parents and find shared interests, both for their children and themselves. Throughout the year the school sponsors events that are designed to bring parents together: Big school-wide cleanup days, grandparent days, and holiday parties all serve to promote parent interaction. Parents of children in the infant/toddler program are encouraged to form a babysitting cooperative as a way of starting to form a support network for the families.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

Parents are expected to become involved with the school; in the two-and-one-half hour meeting for prospective parents, the expectations for parent participation are clearly articulated. The nature of the program demands a high level of parent involvement on a daily basis, but there is also a formal mechanism for parents to have a voice within the school. Two representatives from each classroom serve on the Parent Board. It is the Board's duty to support the school as well as serve as a liaison between parents and the director. The head of the Board is an active member of the interview team for hiring new teachers.

Meeting Family Needs

Because parents are so much a part of the daily operations of the school, family needs are met on an individual basis. Additionally, two aspects of the program work to assist common concerns of many Pacific Oaks families. First, the growing demand for high quality care is met by the before-school and after-school programs offered to Pacific Oaks families. Second, collaborations with private consultants and the Pasadena School District with regard to special needs ensure that families whose children require special services are well-served by the program.

Staff

Pacific Oaks' 33 staff members have been recruited from local community colleges and state universities, and from among practicum students from Pacific Oaks College. Teachers are hired by an interview team consisting of the head of the parent association, the parent representative, the head teacher of the classroom in which the teacher will be placed, and the director. Eight head teachers have a master's degree; all other head teachers have a bachelor's degree; assistant teachers have 12 to 20 units in Early Childhood Education; aides have 3-6 units. Historically, staff retention has been problematic, largely due to the practice of hiring Pacific Oaks students who stay at the school for a few years and then leave to teach in the higher-paying public sector.

Professional Development

Because of the school's affiliation with Pacific Oaks College, teachers benefit from six free units per year for continuing professional development. Teachers are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to take courses at Pacific Oaks College; approximately 50% of the teachers are enrolled at any given time. Teachers are also encouraged to participate and present at professional organization meetings. They are given release time to attend the conferences, and are reimbursed on their expenses of attending. Parents raise $5000 annually for staff development. In-house professional development is conducted via bimonthly head teacher meetings. Teachers generate the agenda, which might include a range of topics from general developmental issues to specific family situations.

Training for Family Support

While some workshop and training sessions are offered by outside speakers, the majority of family support training is conducted informally through conversations with the director and other staff members. Hiring good staff is the key to a successful family support component. If teachers are well-grounded in developmental issues, they are better able to support parents of young children. Therefore, Pacific Oaks Children's School strives to hire teachers who are articulate enough to talk about developmental theory, and skilled enough to translate that theory into practice. Teachers are encouraged to treat all families with compassion, humbleness, appreciation, and tolerance. The Pacific Oaks students who intern at the school get first-hand experience working with parents, an experience that the director feels is crucial but missing in many teacher-training programs.

Challenges and Next Steps

Communication continues to be a challenge. The director feels that communication is both taking the time to work through issues, and knowing the right time to have the conversation. Secondly, building trust with teachers continues to be an issue at the school. Because retention rates are low, teachers do not stay long enough to build the relationships that help strengthen the school as a whole. Furthermore, because many of the teachers have been recruited as college graduates, they do not have the life experiences that the director feels are essential to understanding families. In the next few years, the school hopes to round out its teaching staff to include more experienced educators from a variety of disciplines, all sharing a common enthusiasm and respect for children and their families.

Sheltering Arms Child Development and Family Support
Atlanta, Georgia

Founded over 100 years ago, Sheltering Arms Child Development and Family Support is now a multi-center child care network based on the philosophy that "quality affordable child care empowers families and strengthens communities." The program serves many low-income families and works to involve parents heavily in the development of programs and policies. Committed to improving the quality of child care in the area, Sheltering Arms offers training programs for early childhood professionals in the community as well as its own staff members.

Program Contact	Elaine Draeger, Executive Director
Location (Administration)	350 Techwood Drive Atlanta, GA 30313 Phone: (404) 523-ARMS Fax: (404) 523-9952
Number of Sites	12 centers in Atlanta and surrounding area
Year Program Began	1888
Number Served	1,600 children
Population Served	Predominately African-American, also Asian-American, Caucasian, Latino; primarily young, single-parent, low-income families
Age Range of Children	Six weeks to five years
Staff-to-Child Ratio	Infants 1:4; toddlers 1:6; preschool 1:8-10
1995 Budget	$5,526,517
Primary Funding Sources	Georgia Department of Education, Georgia Department of Family and Children's Services, United Way, and parent tuition fees

Points of Distinction

- **Employs a full-time Family Support Coordinator:** Sheltering Arms shows its commitment to family support by having at each center a full-time family support coordinator who develops a partnership with families and connects them with resources in other community agencies. The coordinator also organizes parent education programs and social activities for families and leads professional development sessions for staff members on family support.

- **Focuses on training:** The program's IN·TRAINING staff development and consulting unit develops and delivers workshops and curriculum materials designed to help entry-level staff members earn the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. IN TRAINING also provides training for experienced staff and administrators. All training includes techniques for family-centered practices.

- **Involves parents and community members in an advisory committee:** Each center has an advisory committee made up of half parents and half community volunteers that works closely with the center director, family support coordinator, and instructional lead teacher to develop programs and policies for the center.

Sheltering Arms Child Development and Family Support
Atlanta, Georgia

Program Background

Founded in 1888, Sheltering Arms is a community service organization that started when a group of prominent women in Atlanta recognized the need for affordable care for the children of women working in the cotton mills. From its beginning, the program focused on working with the family as well as the child; today it offers affordable child care and family support to families in urban and suburban Atlanta. A Board of Directors composed of 30 people representing the civic and corporate community oversees the entire organization, and a centralized executive group regulates activities at the program's 12 centers. These advisory committees facilitate communication between the executive offices and individual centers. Each center has its own advisory committee composed equally of parents and community volunteers that works closely with the center's director, family support coordinator, and instructional lead teacher to manage center activities.

The program is also committed to improving the quality of child care in the community. Its IN TRAINING program provides workshops and curriculum materials to Sheltering Arms' entry-level staff members as well as early childhood professionals in the community working toward their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. IN TRAINING evolved as the staff saw a need for on-the-job training. The program has grown from primarily a community service to a source of income that covers the cost of training Sheltering Arms' staff.

Community and Participant Characteristics

Sheltering Arms' child care centers are located in Atlanta and surrounding towns. Atlanta has a thriving industrial economy, and several large corporations have built headquarters there. The city has a diverse racial and ethnic population with a strong African-American history. The majority of the participating families are African-American, although many other racial and ethnic populations are represented. Consistent with the focus of its founding mothers, the program provides services to low-income families. Although almost all parents are employed at least 20 hours per week, nearly three-quarters of the families served earn less than $18,000 per year. Sheltering Arms serves predominately young parents (the majority are under 25) and single-parent families; however, there is an increasing number of grandparents providing primary care for their grandchildren who place children at Sheltering Arms.

Collaborations

Sheltering Arms collaborates with local colleges and technical schools by accepting their students as interns. Instructors from local colleges sometimes provide training to program staff members, and Sheltering Arms' trainers have offered training in collaboration with area college instructors at state-sponsored training workshops. Sheltering Arms' centers often collaborate with local organizations to provide activities for children and families.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

Sheltering Arms has a clear mission statement which describes the role of the organization to "provide a support system responsive to families and their changing needs." Explaining this mission, Sheltering Arms offers the following definitions: "Support is providing a foundation to build on, a foothold. It is responsiveness to needs, both articulated and unarticulated. Sensitive means to attend to feelings. It is to show positive regard towards someone...demonstrating genuineness, warmth, and empathy. Changing needs means the ongoing process of personal growth and development, [an] individual journey of becoming and learning."

Building Parent-Program Relationships

Family support at Sheltering Arms is based on developing personal relationships with parents in order to identify and respond to individual family needs. Family support coordinators keep a contact log with a page for each parent, and after each contact with a parent, they make a note in the log. At the end of a week or two, the coordinators look through the book to get a sense of how much they have interacted with parents and whether they had significant conversations. If they have not touched base with someone in a while, they make a mental note to mention a parenting class or upcoming field trip the next time they see that parent.

Teachers and family support coordinators also serve as a source of inspiration for parents by showing that they believe in them and giving them reasons to be optimistic. This is especially important when working with young parents in school or entry-level jobs. From their perspective, meeting goals seems to take forever; staff members try to give them hope and encouragement and help them take a long-term view.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

When families enroll in a center, they complete an assessment indicating the parent education topics of most interest to them. Many parents take advantage of the program's educational offerings, which cover topics ranging from child development to money management. Additionally, Sheltering Arms uses Parents as Teachers (PAT), a parent education program designed to enhance child development and academic achievement through activities such as home visits, parent education classes, and developmental screening.

Sheltering Arms has a new model teaching center that includes a room called the "family place" designed specifically for parenting classes and parent-teacher conferences. It also contains a library of resources and materials for parents to check out. In addition, teachers often serve as resources to parents on such subjects as the location of the nearest library, the dates for kindergarten registration, and the process for obtaining a driver's license. Teachers also use informal "personal visits" at the center or in a child's home as a way to share information with parents and find out what supports parents need.

Fostering Parent-to-Parent Relationships

Because the program serves so many parents who are young, isolated, and in need of social supports, many of the program's family support efforts revolve around social events that encourage relationships among parents. For example, a center might offer lemonade when parents come to pick up their child, creating an opportunity for parents to stand around and chat. The goal of these informal activities is to help parents build peer support networks. Relationships among parents are also built through their participation in many parenting sessions.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

Sheltering Arms offers parents a wide range of volunteer and leadership opportunities. Each center has an advisory committee composed of parents whose children attend the center and community volunteers. The committee works closely with the management staff to develop policy and programs for the center. Committee members also search for innovative ways for a center to garner additional funds, goods, in-kind services, and contributions of time and insight from people in the community. In addition, each center has a parent group that facilitates the flow of information between the overall organization and parents at individual centers. Parent groups also organize social activities and plan parent-run fundraisers, which generate about $2,500 per center per year.

Meeting Family Needs

Sheltering Arms stresses the importance of being aware of parents' wants and needs, being flexible, and adapting activities to meet those needs. Teachers realize that many parents have very little discretionary time to spend at the center, and they try to make it clear to parents that their first priorities should be taking care of their family and maintaining their employment. The program provides opportunities for involvement that do not require the parent's physical presence, such as bringing items to the center, taking projects home to work on, and helping plan events. Offering a large choice of activities and scheduling activities at multiple times are other ways that Sheltering Arms attempts to facilitate family involvement.

Sheltering Arms works in partnership with other agencies and organizations to meet the needs of children and their families before a crisis develops. The close relationships with families fostered by the various family support and involvement activities described previously enables the staff to see the needs of families and make sure that they get appropriate help.

Staff

Sheltering Arms has centralized management with a decentralized front line. The main office houses the executive director; the directors of operations, training, and family support; a finance manager; administrative assistants; and entry-level teachers. Each center has its own management team made up of the director, family support coordinator, and instructional lead teacher, all supporting the lead teachers, teacher assistants, and aides in each classroom.

Teachers have a high school degree and experience in the field. Many of them have backgrounds similar to those of the families they serve. While this can be problematic — teachers and parents have the same time constraints, they are young and have young children, and they are not in a high paying job — it also encourages empathy. The program's career progression track and professional development opportunities encourage a low staff turn-over rate, which is 7 percent overall.

Professional Development

Professional development is one of the program's primary goals. Because Sheltering Arms is a large organization with multiple sites, professional development includes training for management, team work, and communication between centers. Sheltering Arms' IN TRAINING program provides workshops and curriculum materials, organized around Child Development Associate (CDA) competencies, to its own entry-level staff and early childhood professionals in the community working toward their CDA credential. Sheltering Arms offers agency-wide training at its main office during the work day and finds substitutes so that teachers can participate. Teachers can choose which sessions to attend and work at their own pace. In addition, each center offers training to its own staff, and teachers who have completed training at the main office are encouraged to offer workshops at their own center. Individual centers also have staff meetings once a month with time reserved for training.

Training for Family Support

Sheltering Arms' family support training builds on the family component of CDA competencies, as well as Georgia's own set of competencies (based on the CDA competencies) that focus on relationships with parents and families. All training materials incorporate a family support philosophy that builds on family strengths and forges relationships between staff members and parents. Staff members learn curriculum theory and also discuss ways to communicate information about curricula contents to parents and how parents can contribute to curricular activities. Family support coordinators from each center meet once a month for family support workshops and bring information back to their centers. Examples of workshop topics include how parent involvement is more than physical presence, how staff can develop relationships and partnerships with parents, and how staff can help parents who are upset or in a crisis.

Challenges and Next Steps

Sheltering Arms faces difficulties typical of a large, multi-site agency. One issue involves managing a staff of 260, a challenge met with management support teams set up at all levels of the organization to prevent feelings of isolation. To encourage and enable the exchange of information and ideas among centers, the program groups the 12 centers into support teams of three center directors and three family support coordinators who meet regularly. Distance is another management issue. With centers geographically dispersed, assembling center-based personnel for a centralized meeting requires much effort. As distance also can be a cause of miscommunication, Sheltering Arms focuses on developing friendly relationships among the staff, as well as open, honest, and frequent communication, to prevent conflicts among centers or staff members.

The growing number of grandparents raising their grandchildren is an issue that will require more attention in the coming years. Presently there are about 30 grandparents who are primary caregivers of children enrolled at Sheltering Arms. The program plans to create and adapt family support services to meet this group's unique needs, offering classes and activities specifically for grandparents.

Webster Child Care Center
Webster Groves, Missouri

With a focus on respect for children and families, Webster staff members work to understand each family's unique circumstances and values and to provide appropriate support in accordance with the wishes of parents. Working in partnership with the public school district, Webster implements Parents as Teachers (PAT). This program teaches parents about early childhood development, takes teachers into the homes of the families they serve, provides children with developmental screening, and facilitates staff members and parents working together to raise children. Webster Child Care Center also provides an innovative intergenerational program which benefits both children and seniors by collaborating with a retirement community.

Program Contact	Sonia Hartman, Executive Director
Location	624 Lohmann Forest Lane Webster Groves, MO 63119 Phone: (314) 968-3189 Fax: (314) 968-0132
Number of Sites	One
Year Program Began	1973; PAT implemented in 1994
Number Served	165 children
Population Served	Primarily Caucasian, 12% minorities; about 25% lower-income, 25% upper- and 50% middle-income backgrounds
Age Range of Children	Six weeks through six years
Staff-to-Child Ratio	Infants/toddlers 1:3; preschool 1:8; Two's 1:5
1995 Budget	$1,000,000
Primary Funding Sources	Parent tuition fees, United Way, local churches, grants, state funds, and private donations

Points of Distinction

- **Uses the PAT program**: Webster Child Care Center uses the Missouri PAT model to provide family support and involve parents in their children's education. PAT gives families information on child development, teaches effective parenting skills, involves home visits, and advocates a "team relationship" between parents and caregivers.

- **Collaborates with the school district:** Webster Child Care Center is involved in a pilot project with the local public school district which makes PAT services available to families at the center. The collaboration enables the school district to meet its state-mandated quota for contact with families by including families involved with PAT at Webster. Webster receives the funding from the school to support these contacts. Without this collaboration, the center would not receive funding to implement its PAT program.

- **Offers an intergenerational program:** Located on the grounds of a retirement community, Webster Child Care offers an intergenerational program through which children visit residents on site and seniors volunteer time in classrooms, providing mutually beneficial experiences for both.

Webster Child Care Center
Webster Groves, Missouri

Program Background

Webster Child Care Center was founded in 1973 by an ecumenical network of local churches who saw a need for quality child care for low-income and other working parents. The center's connection to area churches remains strong, and representatives from some of the founding churches still serve on its Board of Directors or give monetary support. Webster Child Care is managed by a 21-member Board of Directors composed of six parent representatives and other members of the community. Parent tuition fees account for a substantial portion of the center's funding; other funding comes from the United Way and the Missouri Division of Family Services (DFS). The latter provides care for children in protective services and children from families in the DFS's "Futures Program," which offers subsidies to parents who are in job training or continuing their education.

Webster Child Care is located on the grounds of the Laclede Groves Retirement Community, which is administered by the Lutheran Health Care Association. The center's intergenerational program focuses on enabling the young and the elderly to spend time together and form relationships. Small groups of children from the center visit residents in the nursing home, the Alzheimer's unit, and the limited care facility on the campus. Many residents visit the center on a regular basis and volunteer their time in classrooms.

Parents as Teachers (PAT)

The Parents as Teachers (PAT) program, which originated in Missouri, is designed to enhance children's development and academic achievement through parent involvement. PAT's philosophy states that parents are the first and most influential teachers of their children and that children are better prepared socially and academically when their parents are self-confident and competent. Its services include parent education for families with children from birth to age three, home visits, free developmental screenings, and programs for developmentally delayed three- and four-year-olds. Missouri is the only state to mandate parent education and family support programs in every school district; PAT participation, however, is voluntary.

Realizing that services would be enhanced if relationships with parents were stronger, Webster Child Care Center implemented PAT in its Infant, Toddler, and Twos program in 1994. PAT was attractive to the center because it unified the center's programming components and added home visiting. Teachers believe that PAT improves the quality of child care because it encourages communication between teachers and parents, which leads to a trusting relationship. Teachers remark that PAT's parent education program helps reduce some parental stress and increase the pleasure associated with parenting.

Community and Participant Characteristics

Webster Groves is a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri. Because Webster Child Care Center is located just off a major highway, its draws families who commute from St. Louis and the surrounding suburbs. The majority of families come from middle- or upper-class backgrounds, and many have professional careers. The center is able to serve lower-middle-class and low-income families via a sliding scale tuition system, scholarships, and subsidies. About 25 percent of participants receive such help. Families represent diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, as well as different family arrangements. About 12 percent of the children are minorities, a reflection of the demographics of the area.

Collaborations

Webster Child Care Center is involved in a pilot collaboration with the Webster Groves Community School District in which they share PAT resources and funding. School districts are mandated by the state to provide PAT services to a certain number of families each year; the district receives funding based on the number of families it serves. Webster involves families in PAT and receives reimbursement from the school district. By counting the families involved in PAT at Webster, the school district is able to meet its quota for involvement with families. This partnership is mutually beneficial: Schools gain increased access to families of young children and the center offers parenting programs to families.

Webster Child Care is located on the grounds of the Laclede Groves Retirement Community, and the two entities collaborate in an intergenerational program. Structured weekly activities include residents visiting children at the center and children visiting residents where they live. On a less formal basis, children and seniors have many opportunities to interact when they pass each other while going for walks. This collaboration enables children to build relationships with grandparent figures (and vice versa) and has the added benefit of providing extra help in classrooms in the form of senior volunteers.

Family Support Elements

Adopting a Family Support Philosophy

In the literature offered to parents, Webster Child Care describes its family support philosophy: "We feel strongly that day-care need not be viewed as a `necessity' for parent and child, but a positive experience that can enrich both the family and the community." The PAT program is based on the premise "that parents are THE most important people in the lives of young children." These principles guide the center's relationship with families. The center also stresses directly to the children the need to show respect for their parents, teachers, and each other.

Building Parent-Program Relationships

The home visiting of PAT enables teachers to better understand families, see connections between the home environment and children's behavior, and identify the support each family needs. Although the center strongly encourages home visits, the teachers offer alternate forms of parent-teacher meetings to meet the work schedules and preferences of parents. Depending on the age of the child, parents are invited to participate in a minimum of 3-5 personal and home visits per year, 4 parent workshops at the center per year, and several "mini-visits" entailing observation of the child in the classroom. Every effort is made, through questionnaires and personal contacts, to make all services easily accessible to parents.

The center varies teacher schedules to facilitate parent-teacher communication. One teacher may open the center one day and close it the next, thus enabling each teacher to cross paths with each parent at one time or another and establish a dialogue.

Strengthening Parenting Knowledge and Skills

Teachers explain the center's developmentally appropriate curriculum to parents at an orientation meeting. They inform parents about child development and discuss developmentally appropriate behavior and activities. All classrooms at the center are equipped with observation windows so that parents can watch and learn from what happens in their child's classroom.

Every family enrolled in the center is eligible for parent education classes, home visits, and developmental screening for their child. Webster Child Care has both "personal visits," informal conferences which take place in the classroom, and home visits; these give parents and teachers the opportunity to discuss a child's daily activities and development in a setting comfortable to parents. A parenting education class is offered periodically. It consists of one three-hour session in each of four weeks and is open to parents and staff members. A small fee to cover the cost of child care is associated with these classes.

Fostering Parent-to-Parent Relationships

The center's parent meetings help build a positive rapport among parents. Teachers attempt to introduce parents to other parents of children in their child's class and parents who live in different communities. Potluck suppers and other activities let parents get to know one another in an informal setting and are popular. Many parents develop solid friendships and become sources of support for their peers.

Mobilizing Parent Involvement

There are six parent representatives on the Board of Directors who provide leadership in involving other parents and staff members in activities at the center. As stated in Webster's parent handbook, parents are always welcome at the center — to participate in activities, to stay with their child, to join them for lunch, or to share hobbies and interests with their child's group. This open door policy and volunteer opportunities heighten parents' participation in their child's experience at Webster.

Meeting Family Needs

Through PAT, Webster Child Care offers developmental screening and programs for developmentally delayed three- and four-year-olds. Screening does not occur at the center, but at a central location for the entire community's PAT participants. Services for children with special needs, such as speech therapy, are offered on-site.

Center activities such as parent meetings take parents' busy schedules into account and often occur around breakfast or supper, giving parents a chance to relax, spend time with their family, and receive information at the same time. This flexibility leads to a high rate of parent participation. The center also provides free child care during any parent activity, making it easier for parents to attend.

Staff

The majority of Webster Child Care's 40 teachers have either a bachelor's or associate's degree in early childhood education; the rest have compensating experience. The center tries to hire teachers who are committed to the PAT philosophy; many have backgrounds similar to those of the families they serve, or have children of their own, giving them a special empathy for the working parents they support. All classrooms are staffed by three coteachers and a part-time teacher.

Professional Development

The program gives staff development a high priority, and Missouri requires teachers to have at least 12 hours of early childhood education training each year. Many teachers take advantage of outside conferences and guest speakers, and the center allows teachers time off to go to training sessions. Webster Child Care also does in-house training in the form of workshops or inservice days. It occasionally collaborates with other centers to fund consultants to conduct specialized training on topics such as the values of different cultures. For teachers wishing to take college courses, Webster offers tuition reimbursement.

Training for Family Support

To participate in PAT activities, teachers must have at least 60 hours of college credit or five years' experience in the early childhood education field. They also must participate in a special five-day PAT training course called "PAT in the Child Care Center," which leads to certification as a parent educator. The curriculum focuses on understanding child development from birth to three, increasing teachers' reinforcement of the parent's role as teacher, and familiarizing teachers with the various resources available for parents and children. Currently, 17 of 33 Webster Child Care staff members are trained parent educators.

Webster Child Care also provides family support training via weekly staff meetings, during which teachers informally discuss pertinent topics such as being respectful of families. Other family support training occurs during inservice days, which in the past have focused on building relationships with parents and effective communication with families.

Challenges and Next Steps

Implementing PAT in the Webster Child Care Center has been a challenge due to lack of direct funding and limited time. The center constantly faces the question of how to improve the program without overburdening the teachers. PAT often means teachers must work harder and longer for the same amount of money, even though seeing positive results is some compensation.

Webster Child Care has had to adapt PAT in the child care setting. For instance, PAT requires the child to be present during home visits and parent-teacher meetings. Yet the center opted not to enforce that rule rigidly, because it is sometimes unproductive to talk about a child or certain issues in front of the child. The child's presence may also distract the parent and change the parent-teacher dynamic. Therefore, a visit with a family may be in two parts: with the parents alone at the beginning and then joined by the child in the end.

Webster Child Care plans to continue collaborating with the public schools and to increase recruitment for PAT.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

M. Elena Lopez is a senior consultant to the Harvard Family Research Project in Cambridge, MA. Her work on families began in the Philippines, where she studied maternal and child health programs as well as the implications of demographic transitions on family care of the elderly. In the United States, she has worked for over a decade on family support in early childhood programs and family-school-community partnerships. She uses her research, training activities, and membership in national advisory boards to promote quality programs and inform policy development. Her publications include *Paths to School Readiness* and *Early Childhood Reform in Seven Communities*. Ms. Lopez holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology from Harvard University.

Sybilla Dorros was the Editor-in-Chief of HFRP's *Evaluation Exchange* newsletter. She also edited a number of HFRP publications, including *Supporting Latino Families: Lessons from Exemplary Programs*. She is now the Project Manager for Communications at the national non-profit organization, Jobs for the Future. She has written and published more than 100 articles in popular magazines and newspapers; in academic journals; and for a regional news service. She is a member of the International Who's Who of Professionals (1996). Ms. Dorros earned her B.A. in International Relations from Sarah Lawrence College and her M.A. in Asian Studies from the University of the Philippines.

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